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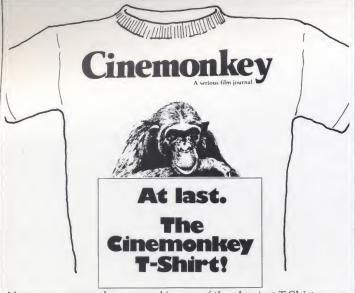


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Notes

The death of New Times is a sad occasion for all film students, for it also signifies the cessation of the film column by Richard Corliss. Corliss had managed to become one of the nation's best film critics, unusual for his insight, his delightfully eccentric taste, his personal approach to writing (its wit and cleverness), all of which gave each of his reviews an individual quality. Most national reviewers are a little stodgy: Corliss was a breath of fresh air every two weeks. The demise of New Times was rapidly followed by the announcement that Pauline Kael was leaving The New Yorker. Is it hoping too much that Corliss might get the job? His style probably wouldn't fit in. Considering the amount of attention the whole affair has received, The New Yorker can be proud of its prestige, if not its influence. Unfortunately, Penelope Gilliatt has become a bit obtuse of late, as if her boredom with the post drove her to bizarre experiments and unusual thoughts; perhaps she has simply ceased to consider her readers. At any rate, the world hangs on the name of her future co-reviewer, as do thousands of subscriptions.

The appearance of the new Andrew Sarris book from Columbia University Press, *Politics and Cinema*, and the variety of reviews it has received points out a pertinent problem in reviewing of any kind: who is right? I have no solution for the problem, but I believe that in any critical conflict, there is a correct view, as opposed to a "That's just the way I see it" attitude. Three reviews in particular illustrate the nature of this diversity: John Simon in *New York*, James Monaco in *The New York Times Review of Books*, and Morris Dickstein in *American Film*.

Simon and Sarris have been at each other's throats for years, and Simon's review probably won't change that, although he is surprisingly generous at times. Though he finds that the word "politics" is ill-defined as used in the title of the book, he does praise Sarris on Riefenstahl and State of Siege. He also finds Sarris an unaesthetic critic, rarely describing a film's look, and a list-maker rather than an historian. Simon then makes a list of his own: Sarris's grammatical errors. Surely the errors are correctly pointed out, but is Sarris totally to blame, since they could be the printer's errors? Simon does find several insights in the book, however. Monaco's review is more middle of the road, noting the obvious lack of political articles toward the end of the book, and giving a brief "the meaning of Sarris" analysis, which covers no new ground, but which uses the finalizing generalities one would expect from the Times. Dickstein's is the longest, as well as the most positive, the author trying to place the book in its cultural context. He finds inconsistencies in Sarris, but views them as

a sign of strength: "He reacts to films not out of preconceived political ideology but with a flash of gut instinct." Dickstein goes on to compare Sarris to Orwell. But Dickstein's review is an aid to defining the very act of criticism: "The test of any critic is his ability to keep his gaze planted steadily on the object; the test of a superior critic is his capacity to make the object exemplary, to connect it to general principles and significant ideas." If ultimately I prefer the Dickstein, it is not only because it is positive, but because it educates, rather than just dictates, taste.

Of continual delight is American Cinematographer, for the simple reason that they print the best interviews in the field. Their recent two-part interview with Gordon Willis was much better than the elaborate and oblique New Yorker profile. While Rolling Stone will print a dull interview with Steven Spielberg on CE3K filled with Boy Scout anecdotes, AC will run a long, complex, and thoughtful (though technical) interview. Unfortunately, what with their yearly Oscar issue, and the cover stories on such films as King Kong and Love at First Bite, they can't quite shake the image of PR men for Hollywood clunkers. Also, the way they continue articles elsewhere in the issue is very confusing. Their excellent coverage of Big Wednesday more than makes up for their old-guard stance, and anyway, even reading about The Hurricane tells you something.

Woody Allen has put forth his two cents in Manhattan on novelizations, virtually blaming them for the general decline of civilized values. It is a bastard "art" that reaches such ludicrous depths as books based on the script to Richard Lester's Three Musketeers (the Dumas classic just won't do) and Grease, based on a musical, but sans music, sans dancing, sans singing, sans everything. Screenplays are just too "hard to read," or so the publishers tell us. Now the fotonovelTM comes along to recreate the film experience in paper form. Published by FotonovelTM Publications in L.A., these books don't show the most cogent artistic choices: so far the list includes Ice Castles, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, Grease (again!), and recently Hair and The Champ, which came out just as the film did, serving as extended trailers for the films. It is not the fact that these fumettis do not recreate the "feel" of the film, the editing or what have you; after all, they can't even recreate the dialogue accurately. The films are bowderized, thoughts are imposed on the characters, the frames are mutilated, the layout is confusing, and there are numerous explanatory paragraphs that state the obvious. And yet they could be so good, as good as Kubrick's book of A Clockwork Orange. Kubrick took the time to match image and dialogue, and to reproduce accurately the image size, unlike Richard J. Anobile in his series, which distorted frames,

printed them out of order, put dialogue in out of sync, and eventually started adding cartoon-like sound effects. Film students and critics need some way to refer to a film and check their memories. At one time one hoped that *fumetti* books would serve this function. So much for optimism.

From the anonymity of American Classic Screen, and a nonentity named James Welsh with his column called "Periodically Yours...," comes a particularly puerile and loathsome savaging of Cinemonkey. The subtitle, "a serious film journal," apparently disturbs Mr. Welsh's limited imagination, for he seems unable to see it as an ironic counterpoint to our startling and facetious title. He ridicules the introduction to the Letter to Jane transcript (which he mysteriously calls a "typescript"), complaining about a dangling participial construction, when in fact his whole column is written in a sloppy, incomprehensible style that shows no natural feel for language. He criticizes (though the verb loses all meaning in the hands of hacks) the Pretty Baby parody as being "pretty awful," offering as proof one joke which he fails to print in its entirety. Later he makes his own impoverished pun while discussing an article in Cinegram on Wim Wenders, who tells a "chicken story [which] seems rather paltry (which is not to say poultry)." Talking about the "Notes" section, Welsh says it "is written by someone identified, whimsically, I thought (wrongly), as 'N.O. Grace." Welsh cannot even write a coherent sentence. What the hell does he mean? Am I real or not? This nonsensical construction, with its misplaced parenthesis, seems to suggest that I don't exist. Welsh would be well advised to discuss ideas rather than identities. That fact that Welsh sent a query to this magazine's editor concerning an on-the-set piece about the new Star Trek film, and was refused, probably has nothing to do with his vile appraisal of Cinemonkey. And it is probably a printer's error that, in his list of subjects I discussed, Lacan's name is spelled "Lucan."

On a more serious level, the level of a mind engaged in the world of ideas, Andrew Britton's article, "The Ideology of Screen," in Movie 26 is brilliant. He analyzes the three leading ideological fathers of the magazine, Althusser, Lacan, and Barthes, and discusses the flaws in their thinking, following their inconsistencies on to Screen and showing how they weaken Screen's project. This is not a discussion of films, but of theory, and though the piece is dense, it is also literate, well written, and convincing. In a more perfect world the piece would spark off a round of debate, and perhaps it will eventually cause more response in England than over here. Nevertheless, Britton makes it possible to disagree violently with Screen without looking like a reactionary. I strongly urge the reading of N.O. Grace this article.



HADDENTERS OWEEN

By Sean Mercer

Halloween is the best film of last year. Here's why: 1) Made on a budget of less than a quarter of a million dollars, with a non-union crew in Los Angeles during three weeks, the film nevertheless shows no sign of its poverty, other than in, perhaps, the paucity of players. The photography, by Dean Cundey, is rich in greens, yellows, and blues, as befits the autumnal ambiance, and, the camera tracks in elegant follows, slides and swerves. The opening seven-minute take is a clever surprise, the subjective Panaglide camera preventing the viewer from knowing that the murderer is an 8-year-old boy, the discovery coming when the boy's father rips away the child's mask, and the camera cranes back and up from the mad, shocked face of the child, heaving breathlessly, to the full receding tableau of him flanked by unknowing parents. The script, as we see it realized on the screen, is excellent, the misleading simplicity of plot embodying a multitude of possibilities, themes, and feelings. Though some horror pictures go through a number of convoluted movements to create situations and suspense, *Halloween* reduces the horror genre to its basic elements: mad killer, teenage girls. From this basic premise comes a mythical and poetic rendering.

2) The film is kinetic. It utilizes the full force of the cinema's power to execute emotions of pity and fear, and simply to create motion. The agonizing suspense is perfectly wrought, and the "stupidity" of the main characters wandering into dark rooms is utterly consonant thematically with their ignorance of the "evil's" presence. The film works as an entertainment, as sociology, and as art.

3) For fans of young turks, Halloween indicates the joyous presence of John Carpenter, after the entertaining (though not fully realized) promise of Dark Star and Assault on Precinct 13. He can be construed as one of the horde of film student filmmakers who know more about light meters than life, but though there are influences in Halloween, it is a pervasive knowledge of technique rather than the perpetual theft of

ideas and shots from the catalogue of other directors. The film shows an innate feel for the possibilities of film, as well as a love of color and camera movement. Such success and artistic freedom with low budgets makes any possible move to bigger budgets seem like a regression rather than an advance.

4) I believe the film reflects the "mood of the times" more completely than almost any other recent film and I will use the rest of this article to argue my case.

The film's sense of timeliness is inextricably associated with its meaning. (I don't assume only one possible meaning; rather, the thematic threads lead me to one interpretation.) It seems that a horror film's meaning, especially one as quickly conceived and realized as *Halloween* is, more "sociological" than the meaning of the films of another genre, as if the artist's unconscious had complete freedom, and the artist himself had absolute faith in his spontaneous impulses. *Halloween*'s rapidity of creation would only serve to enhance the unifying entity of an unconscious, allowing

the artist no time to contemplate the implications of his ideas (and thus modify or alter them). This emphasis on the unconscious is ironic, for the film shows a Freudian dread and suspicion of the unconscious.

One hallmark of contemporary film is its lack of strong conflict. Rare is the film in which a villain is both complex and ruthless in the fashion of both great literature and earlier films, the latter of which, unfortunately, emphasized the ruthlessness over the complexity. There seems to be a general withdrawal from excessive displays of conflict, as if filmmakers dreaded arousing any passion in their audiences. There are exceptions, of course, as, for example, Star Wars, but the innocent, if not childish, level of the film nullifies any imposing belief in evil in a mature viewer's mind. From such love stories as The Promise, The Champ, Heaven Can Wait, and so on, where in the past the "evil," troublemaking characters would cause much more anxiety, to the pale dramas of Network, Cuckoo's Nest, Rocky, etc., where there are sympathetic portrayals of good, perhaps, but no comparable evildrama is saccharine, bleached out, made safer for the viewer to deal with emotionally. On the other hand, we have flattenedout, emotionless films, like those of Alan Rudolph, heavily influenced by European masters, but more a childish parody of the European style's air of detachment. The cinema does have its villains, but no evil; the all-consuming desire to destroy for destruction's sake. This is no prescription. There are many films that do not have "evil" as a subject. Rather, this is an appraisal of recent films that skirt the issue of evil in a fearful and hesitant manner that makes them suffer aesthetically.

Though there are other exceptions, I choose to analyze Halloween as the antithesis of this trend, a film which seemingly indicates, because of its success, a psychological climate that has gone previously unfulfilled. The essence of Halloween is a burst of violence on the part of an insane, though clever, man who is "unstoppable," ubiquitous, and virtually inhuman. He is set against a small group of young women who remain ignorant of his existence, are powerless to stop him when he does attack. and seem to merit his fury due to the licentious and vain orientation of their actions and thoughts. In short, these and other factors create a paradigmatic example of the narcissistic personality and the fears and defenses involved with it, as described by Christopher Lasch in his recent The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (W.W. Norton, New York, 1978). To see the characters of the film as manifestations of a prevailing pathology is not to establish its artistic worth, but it does make clear the film's working out of various thematic elements. In the clarity of its plot and the purity of its character types, Halloween is the strongest current cultural example of the state of affairs described by Lasch.



John Michael Graham and P. J. Soles in Halloween.

Lasch stresses that the word "narcissism" has come to mean the opposite of its clinical usage. "Sennett reminds us that narcissism has more in common with selfhatred than with self-admiration" (Lasch, page 31). As he summarizes them, the main character traits of pathological narcissism are "dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by others, combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings.... The secondary characteristics of narcissism [are] pseudo self-insight, calculating seductiveness, nervous, selfdeprecatory humor" (Lasch, page 33). He goes on to point out "connections between the narcissistic personality type and certain characteristic patterns of contemporary culture, such as the intense fear of old age and death, altered sense of time, fascination with celebrity, fear of competition, decline of the play spirit, deteriorating relations between men and women" (Lasch, page 33).

One of the many consequences of the narcissistic culture is a bureaucracy that "erodes all forms of patriarchal authority, and thus weakens the social superego, formerly represented by fathers, teachers, and preachers" (Lasch, page 11). But though the climate may change, individual psychology remains: the superego does not dissolve. "It encourages instead the development of a harsh, punitive superego that derives most of its psychic energy, in the absence of authoritative social prohibitions, from the destructive, aggressive impulses within the id. Unconscious, irrational elements in the superego come to dominate its operation. As authority figures in modern society lose their 'credibility,' the superego in individuals increasingly derives from the child's primitive fantasies about his parents-fantasies charged with sadistic rage-rather than from internalized ego ideals formed by later experience with loved and respected models of social conduct" (Lasch, page 11-12). In a brilliant footnote to the paragraph previously quoted, Lasch describes how the pre-Oedipal aggressive impulses of the superego are later tempered by interaction with a moderate reality (which leads to the "ego ideal"). If the early experience of the parents as "devouring monsters" is lacking, 'as is often the case in a society that has radically devalued all forms of authority," then the "superego can be expected to develop at the expense of the ego ideal" (Lasch, page 12). Elsewhere Lasch points out that the clinical depression Freud described in "Mourning and Melancholia" as "mourning with its admixture of guilt," becomes in the narcissistic personality "impotent rage and 'feelings of defeat by external forces'" (Lasch, page 39). Quoting Otto Kernberg again, Lasch tells how the child's own aggression is both projected and internalized. Through constant projection the world becomes a place of "dangerous, threatening objects." (Kernberg, quoted by Lasch, page 39). Dividing his own aggression up amongst external objects successfully keeps the child from having to admit to himself his own abhorred aggression.

It is easy to see how the psychic structures Lasch describes become translated into the figures in Halloween. Michael Myers as an adult is the punitive superego overfed by forces of the id, while Annie and Lynda are the ineffectual, childlike ego with no firm sense of inner strength, as created by emulation of strong parental figures, who live and are incorporated into one's psychic environment. Charles Poncé, in his book, The Nature of the I Ching (Award, 1970), points out that the assault on the ego by Oriental religions is particular to them because the culture promotes strong ego, and what characterizes Western culture is a profound lack of self. "That the Occidental must seek support and comfort in systems foreign to himself is an indication that his ego is underdeveloped, not overdeveloped, as we too often assume" (Poncé, page 15).



The older Myers's impersonation of Bob.

With this orientation as a guideline, we can conclude that, whatever the personal, mad reason for Myers' return, thematically it is to destroy the careless, vain behavior of the girls. The three of them are an imbalanced mixture of adolescent self-absorption and insecurity. Annie and Lynda are both sexually active and indifferent to anything but the "moment" (as shown in Lynda's description of the school books she doesn't take home), while Laurie, the intelligent schoolgirl, though not as vain as her friends, is nonetheless overly self-conscious. Annie is pleased that Laurie thinks "about things like that" (boys and sex), manifested in such a hideous and insensitive glee one can only assume a fundamental feeling of insecurity on her part about her own sexuality. Laurie's much-commented-on "virginity" does not provide her with a purity that saves her, but rather with the freedom from self-absorption that distracts (and allows the deaths of) Lynda and Annie. For example, while Laurie "knows" of Myers's presence all along, Lynda, upon first seeing him drive by, mistakes him for a cute boy at school. We are allowed to see the irony in Laurie's sense of exclusion from her contemporaries; although Annie and Lynda have an admirable vitality and openness, they also have a cruel camaraderie that does not exclude competition, a "calculated seductiveness" (the way Lynda gets Bob to get her a beer, how Annie entices "El Jerko" on the phone), a relentless self-ishness that satisfies needs of which even they are not aware. In contrast to this, Laurie, in her sensitivity, self-reflection, intelligence, and quick thinking, is especially attractive, and though she regrets her alienation, we can see her as being much better off.

It is significant that the young Myers murders his sister as she is sitting before a mirror and that Annie, before she is killed, pauses briefly before a mirror and brushes her hair. The parallel only more pointedly illustrates the vengeance against their self-absorption by the vindictive superego, but also indicates a cyclic sense to Myers's madness. According to Dr. Loomis, Myers has spent a lifetime awaiting the opportunity of another Halloween. But why? What is the nature of his insanity, and why does he return? That the first two murders commence after the same action (his murder of

the mechanic not being a part of his compulsion, but rather an expediency to achieve his groundwork) alerts us to the cyclic nature of his aggression. His desire to return suggests that as a child he did not "finish the job," and though the fact of the unfinished business may not have occurred to him for several years, once he is activated, he must not only recreate the murder of his sister (with Lynda, whom he kills after she has sex), but also the boyfriend (Bob), friends, etc. The knife is a phallic symbol, obviously, and his stabbing of Judith is clearly a substitution for his own inability to acknowledge his desire to have sex with her (notice that he puts on the mask before he stabs her, the same mask her boyfriend playfully donned before they retired to the bedroom).

It may not be valid to imagine states of mind not explicitly described, but it seems to me that the compulsion to recreate the murder and proudly display it, headstones and all, represents the desperate suppression of a mad guilt over both the murder of his sister and the sexual desire (notice, in fact, that none of this speculation is included in the film-Carpenter and Debra Hill avoid the over-analysis that mars the end of Psycho for many). The infantile nature of this genius madman (who, in a brilliant bit, goes to Lynda in a ghost sheet, wearing Bob's glasses) is beautifully evoked in the kitchen long shot of Myers as he turns his head from side to side, fascinated by the spectacle of Bob's death. The pervasiveness of his presence in Haddonfield gives credence to thinking of him as a superego run amuck. Loomis calls him "the evil" and he seems to be everywhere at once. We can infer his movements later (that is, figure out where he was later as we watch a different scene), and his movements are consistent, but the experience of the film creates a feeling of unstoppable, inhuman power. The conclusion, in which Myers is shown once again to be unstoppable after three false endings, has to be taken metaphorically. After all, he has been shot six times, stabbed in the eye and throat, and has fallen from the second floor of a house. In such a wounded state he could not get far, particularly after killing the sheriff's daughter. Rather, the ending simply re-establishes the pervasive sense of doom toward which the film has moved, the narcissistic vision of evil, the black, uncontrollable impulse of the unconscious, as a powerful, unstoppable all-knowing entity that toys with the helpless and weak. Laurie's redemption is caused by a working through of any remaining "narcissism" she may have had; to put it less clinically, she has transcended through her experience all the tendencies that would make the life of Annie and Lynda attractive to her. The "evil" that has been released is nonetheless still a part of the very culture. In this way, fate, or the fate of pathology, as discussed in Laurie's class at school, "is a natural element, Fate is immovable, like a mountain. Fate never changes."



Jake (George C. Scott) discusses theology with Niki (Season Hubley) in Hardcore.

By Charles Schwenk

Amongst film aficionados, the more simple-minded or shy smut fans, and the strong and growing coterie of Paul Schrader enthusiasts, Hardcore was awaited with special enthusiasm; yet all seem to have walked away in varying degrees of disappointment. Perhaps they were expecting the violence and vivid iconography, the heavy, hellish metaphors of Taxi Driver; perhaps there was a sense of unfulfilled possibilities, that a brilliant premise was somehow uncharged with the expected degree of eroticism or politics. Without a doubt, the genius of the premise allows one to forget cinematic antecedents, films such as Joe (also with Peter Boyle), and Taking Off, both of which were concerned with the "hippie" underground, and Hustle, which had a subplot involving Ben Johnson's brief search for the murderers of his daughter in the L.A. smutfilm world. The more austere European influence was apparently felt but unrecognized-not that it would have made any difference to the popular audience. Schrader's trust in his audience seems misplaced; his desire to coolly let both worlds of purity and porn meet and briefly merge without undue sensationalism, while nevertheless himself remaining emotionally and intellectually involved, was unperceived by the popular audience (not enough thrills) and overlooked by the film buffs (references not obvious enough). This "flatness" of approach, however, should not distract one from the surprising variety of visual technique. One thinks of the surprising leaps to overhead shots at moments of "divine" judgment on Jake: his foul-mouthed exit from the Stairway to Love, the criss-crossing grating that serves as a ceiling at once a token of his feeling of imprisonment and exclusion from the cold and incomprehensible world of pornography, as well as his separation from God; also the, again judgmental, shot of Jake as he beats and sprays Jism Jim (one is also aware of this, however, as the solution to the purely technical problem of how to shoot a shower scene); and finally, the sublime combination of editing, camera placement, camera movement, and performance, which make Jake's viewing of his daughter's smut film one of the great scenes in recent American film.

Jake is the principal focus of the film's double-meaning title, the hardcore religious man who challenges and triumphs against the world of explicit hardcore sex. His daughter, the impetus for this journey, is relatively unemphasized, Schrader has said. so as not to imbalance this focus. We don't learn biographical reasons for her sudden flight, though the early shot of Jake's nephew as he reacts to his mother's question ("You would never let that happen to your mother, would you?"), which occurs at just the moment Jake learns by telephone of his daughter's disappearance, is indication enough of the sort of repression-byguilt that youth, in this small society, might find insufferable compared to the temptations that exist all around. Kristen is as much a stranger to us as she is to Jake. As Schrader said to Robert Bresson in his *Film Comment* interview (Sept.-Oct., 1977, page 26-29), "Symptoms are universal, causes are particular. Symptoms are more interesting because we all have the symptoms, but we have different causes. Movies should be about symptoms, rather than about causes" (page 29).

It is Jake's town, full of children playing in the snow, upon which the red, sexual word "hardcore" is emblazoned during the credits. The white snow and the cold climate suggest the severity and striven-for purity of the Grand Rapids populace. (To carry the metaphor on, the snow only covers the dirt, however; even Grand Rapids has an adult bookstore.) Against nature's cold, the family congregates, has Thanksgiving dinner, watches television, discusses religion, and gives thanks. This is Jake's world, and he knows how to function in it. With the display designer Mary, Jake is good humored, a gentle convincer, questioning her until he gets what he wants (a lighter blue), and one can imagine how this sympathetic, but obviously compensatory, cajolery could drive both a wife and a daughter away, as well as so poorly disguising violence and determination. At the same time it is out of place in the world of pornography, where, in the film's view, such qualities as patience, gentleness, and humor, are dead weight. Jake obviously loves his daughter and is shaken by her long absence—though we are not told how much his faith is shaken; rather, the anguish must



Director Paul Schrader between George C. Scott and Season Hubley.

be both predestined and accepted. That he later begins to search for her does not contradict the predestination of his religion; after all, it is God who is all-seeing, not man, who is only capable of doing all that is within his power to create his circumstances or cease existing as a human being as well as a subject worthy of God's love. He simply acts with the optimism and confidence of one who believes he is of the Elect. Jake's anguish is beautifully and subtly communicated in the point-of-view shot of the child walking down the road, to screen left, whom he sees behind his brotherin-law's house; lake sits, talks, and, looking out, now sees the barren, lifeless road, while wondering out loud if Wes could have faith without doubt. It is immediately following this scene that Mast shows Jake the smut film starring Kristen. Jake's sense of displacement in L.A., his fundamental inability to effect changes or desired actions on those he meets, is underscored by Jack Nitzsche's grating rock motifs, representing the clashing of two cultures, in its contrast with the "Precious Memories" and the sirens that blare in the background whenever he is in a pornography establishment-even the one in Grand Rapids. After being brutalized at the Stairway of Love, he lies in his hotel room, the religious choir on the television a bitter mockery of any religion's effectiveness in this milieu: the circular pan around the room represents Jake's turning around, his realization that he must merge with those he hates in order to remain himself, to "dress less square" so he "won't be hassled."

There is a shock cut and Jake slides into

screen left, eyes hidden by sunglasses, the billboard behind him a written indication that he is now going to "Think Pink."

Television is blamed for the prevailing erosion of moral rigor, by Joe, near the film's beginning. Later Jake lashes out at television as well—he has been reduced to Joe's level -but it is the overreaction of an asexual man who has spent too much time in a totally sexually oriented environment. The pornographic underworld is only a more vulgar, more obvious version of the "overground" society. But whatever the emotional motivations of his charge, nonetheless it is true. His awareness of societal "corruption" is newfound. By his own admission he doesn't care what happens in New York and L.A., or about movies, television and Johnny Carson. The peaceful blindness of his Grand Rapids existence is shattered, and he reacts in the laughable, futile manner of Joe. His tentative gesture to Niki in the final scene is a revealing of the quality of human acceptance that was threatened by the ugliness of what he had discovered.

Jake's association with Niki, however, is what finally leads him to his daughter. Her presentation is problematic. Though seen with obvious sympathy, she must nevertheless at the film's end be consigned to her own world, Jake to his, the worlds they both know how to deal with. (See William Cadbury's discussion elsewhere in this issue.) Niki makes it easy for Jake by turning and walking away from him. The

unpleasantness of the sexual underworld is shown primarily through her-the cheap parlors, the cold nights of wearying filmmaking, the daily financial struggle. She is also more attuned to the similarities between herself and Jake than Jake is, which points up her need for "fathers," from her black pimp to Jake, and that she is a "temporary" daughter only. Their theological conversations together are at one and the same time both witty and moving. Neither of them changes, of course; that would interfere with the freedom of the audience to weigh the moral issues. This is not a film about change, but rather about the shifting edge of two worlds that tolerance allows to exist side by side in mutual ignorance, until one man feels the need to fight for the wholeness of his family. The ambivalence of the force of Jake's desire is shown in his actually brutalizing Niki to get information from her. We respect the urge while being shocked at the methods, but we realize that Jake's character is not being whitewashed; he is presented as a full human, capable of tenderness as well as brutality. It is his resistance to human tenderness that prevents him from wanting to hear about Niki's past, and as we learn from Kristen in the end, Jake has had similar attitudes toward her. The two worlds of Niki and Jake cannot mix, and Niki's realization of this at the film's conclusion can be viewed as a moment of sad courage.

Mast is a buffer between these worlds. Despised by members of both, he can none-

theless move comfortably in either of them. He is intimidated by Jake's physical moral force, and seems to have contempt for Niki, to the point of subtly torturing her about her past and her lack of future with Jake. Mast kills Ratan in the end because Jake would not be able to get away with it, legally or aesthetically. He needs to be utterly free if he is to be allowed to return home. (Mast can get away with it, at least aesthetically. If there is a cinematic flaw, it is that the film lacks a strong enough feeling elicited from the audience against Ratan; he is a shadowy figure, and it is hard to imagine that he "loves" Kristen as much as she says he does.) Both Mast and Niki subscribe to weird religions; she is a Venusion, and he practices Mind Science, but this points up the interesting pervasiveness of religion in the smut world, though as the two of them are described, the religions seem here like uninterested, token religions, sustained enough to satisfy any basic need for religious faith.

The climax, with its confrontation between Jake and Kristen, has been a problem for many. The dialogue between the two seems to come out of nowhere, unprepared for by the script, not arising organically from incidents and feelings established earlier. Kristen, completely changed in attitude from how we have seen her at the beginning, screams at lake, who engages in some momentary self-reproach, using words like "pride," which have not been heard before. She complains about the nature of her home life, complaints that don't seem justified by what we know. A moment later she has reversed herself, in an incredible "happy ending" that seems rushed, as if there were several loose ends that needed tying up, and the dialogue is burdened with the task. There are several culminating elements leading up to this moment that must be sorted out, and which put into perspective the dialogue between them-dialogue that cannot be taken acceptably at face value; one must look behind what, especially, Kristen is uttering in order to find defense against the charge of hurriedness.

Throughout the film the nature of sex for sale becomes increasingly more violent, reaching its peak with the "snuff" film, and Jake's pursuit of Tod through the House of Bondage. Out on the street Jake beats Tod until he learns the whereabouts of Ratan. Filmed in longshot as they roll over each other down the steep San Francisco street, the scene is reminiscent of Bresson's Mouchette, in which Mouchette, the misunderstood wanderling, commits suicide by rolling down a hill into a pond to drown. The two men's physical confusion (at a few moments they are totally undistinguishable from each other) reminds one also of the passage in Lolita where Humbert Humbert describes his tussle with Quilty as, "...he rolled over me. I rolled over him. We rolled over me. They rolled over him. We rolled over us." Obviously, what with the heavy metaphor of the garbage that they spill, Jake is be-



coming "soiled" by his contact with Hell. Upon finding Ratan, however, and seeing Kristen, he regains his resolve. He is not after revenge or judgment. After fielding Ratan's attack, he continues after Kristen. To ease our concern about Ratan's escape, to allow us to see Jake and Kristen's confrontation without the tug of other business, Mast shoots Ratan, and we watch his gradually slowing run, propelled more by dying animal energy than by will, and he finally collapses before an adult movie theater.

But Jake and Kristen must descend further. Finding her in a storeroom, he makes a conciliatory gesture toward her. He assumes she wants to go home with him. She doesn't. He is quickly brought to tears by the shock of her refusal, and confesses that pride motivated him. He cannot manipulate Kristen as he manipulated the display designer. There are no longer any secrets between them; they both have faced too much to put on a pretense. But Kristen clearly doesn't mean what she says, if her reversal is to come so quickly. She wants to hate Jake, though she can't, for her hatred would justify the life into which she has fallen. The increasingly close association of sex and violence has reached its purgation with Ratan's death, but the converse tendency, the suppression of sexuality, as epitomized by the very motivations of Kristen's running away, must now be worked out. Kristen must go through the act of rejecting her father before she can accept him.

All this is well and good, but it does not account for the lived experience of the film. What we are meant to feel is clear, but it is in conflict with what we do feel: too much being done in too little space. It is a scene such as this one that, in parody form, represents Schrader's ambition. He opposes two fictional worlds and waits for a dialectic to emerge. That one of the most crucial scenes in the film is flubbed indicates that either there was no enthusiasm behind the Kristen character, other than as a premise for Jake's story, or the scene is not actually so crucial. Clues suggest the former over the latter. Hardcore is a difficult film for what it requires from its audience without seeming to require anything. The film is not a masterpiece (the full, rich, and multifaceted work of a master, capable of eliciting the most profound feelings and thoughts, so original that the viewer must reorder his perceptions simply to grasp it, and in which form and content are virtually inseparable while at the same time highly unique). But the film's freshness in contrast to other contemporary pictures, particularly in terms of its viewpoint, barely touched, much less exhausted, by other filmmakers, gives the film a certain distinction.



THE DEER HUNTER

By Sid Falko

The Deer Hunter has created such controversy as a political entity that I think it would be valuable to consider it, briefly, purely as an aesthetic object. Certainly art affects us in many ways, but many of these effects are brought to the film by ourselves. Americans, being more comfortable with politics than with art, fumble with their dismissal of the film on any other level but the political, while Europeans, overly conscious of the great guise of Art to propagandize, nervously picket the film. Among

popular audiences, however, *The Deer Hunter* has acquired a loyalty of unusual proportions, and the comments most often heard attest to the emotional power of the film. The experience is "draining," etc. There are several strands here that need to be clarified. Doubtlessly the film *is* intense, but only during the Vietnam and roulette sequences. Surrounding these scenes are evocations of ordinary life, scenes which may appeal to the spectators' sense of their own life receiving the glorification and the



John Savage and his bride are hoisted above the crowd in The Deer Hunter.

permanent iconography of high art. In the tradition of prestige pictures, The Deer Hunter has the air of great art (an aura several Oscars will not dissipate) that only time will eradicate, or confirm. Doubtlessly for a large portion of the audience there is a group-think conformity, in which a spectator will imagine his experience as something vaguely aesthetic, intense, and moving simply because the soil of social conversation makes it easy to talk oneself into joining along. How many people actually found themselves bored with much of the film's first hour? At any rate, all of this is a part of the film's life, but I propose to follow a closed approach, to evaluate the film historically, if that is possible, detached but not indifferent to the passions of contemporary politics and audience response. An historical evaluation will attempt to see the film's place in the future of cinema, reflecting how scholars might view the film, all of which is an indirect way of asking if the film we are seeing right now is any good or

The Deer Hunter is an epic of ordinary men and women, whose community is delivered several successive blows, but who finally triumph against the horror and destructiveness of outside forces and inner difficulties, for there is no suggestion of the group's freedom from internal strife. Linda's father beats her and Stan is deeply but blindly concerned with his sexual life and the power structure of sexual and non-sexual relationships (to the point, in fact, of always carrying a small gun, clearly a compensation for a feeling of vulnerability in relation to his friends). An opening shot of the Russian Orthodox church reveals in the foreground a street alcoholic; the lead singer of the wedding party's band is a selfabsorbed hustler who affects an enormous cigar. Despite these indications of disharmony, the community is cohesive, and in

the end, the singing of "God Bless America" is in no way ambivalent; it signifies a return to prior cohesion that, though altered, is fundamentally sustained. The ending is therefore aesthetically a logical outgrowth of the film's commitment: Michael's desire to abide by Nick's request to not let him be left in Vietnam. Though diverted temporarily by the enormity of the horror his experiences have led him to, Michael makes himself whole again by acting on Nick's request, which ultimately unites all the survivors.

Michael admits that the other men in the group are "assholes" and that were it not for Nick he would have no part of them. The two friends are extremely close, sharing a trailer, Michael even coveting the other's girlfriend. Michael is the nag of the two, criticizing Nick for minor things around the house. From the beginning one feels Nick to be the self-destructive one. He was haunted before he went to Vietnam. The French gambler who draws Nick into the dangerous roulette game could only have done so if he were able to sense Nick's potential for craziness and self-destruction. Nick's resistances and protestations outside the den seem particularly unemphatic, and the ease with which he is drawn on to the mysterious events below shows a curiosity of destructive proportions. Vietnam did not necessarilv make Nick go nuts, but rather, because of his weaker character, the potential for craziness that lay within was released. The key difference between Michael and Nick is that, though sharing the same tendencies, he is able to suppress them, through a number of elaborate rituals, which include the philosophy of the one shot, the evasion of women, and the mania for community. Whether these are good rituals is unimportant; at this point in the film the key thrust is the development of the differences between Michael and Nick.

In terms of the film, Michael is quite obviously a difficult figure, not only because of the detached manner of the presentation (in which it is not clear whether it is an artistic choice, or whether a European sensibility is intruding in an attempt to allow the spectator more freedom of feeling about him), and the quite wide lacunas in our knowledge of him, but because what we do learn about him contradicts the moral expectations of the spectator: his killing the deer, the momentary decision to leave Steve behind at the compound, his drunken pursuit of Linda at the wedding party, and his nude trek through the streets. As in many contemporary films, the director seems to abrogate his role as moral arbitor and active, feeling presence. An example of this is Michael's early morning homecoming and his conversation with Linda. What is the existential truth of the situation? Streep's performance of an "ordinary" person is brilliant, her delivery of the dialogue is so reminiscent of people we might know in its inflection and accent as to make her touching, but the spectator may also have a feeling of superiority to her. One asks oneself why Michael, presented for the most part as if he were not a part of his group, but rather, above it, would be interested in her at all. He may well wonder himself, but it is not clear from the film. They are ill at ease with each other, but her holding up to Michael's chest the sweater she was knitting for Nick is a foreshadowing of her eventual transference of affection. But Michael is kept in an emotional shadow, and it is not possible to see this as a part of the film's design. It is a failure to work out some of the inherent ambiguities, the same ambiguities which are seized upon to defend the film and portray its politics as more correct. The shooting of the first deer is not ambiguous, however. There is no moral disdain in the close-up of the deer as it falls, as there is moral revulsion in the death of the rabbits in La Règle du leu. Also the scene where Michael tells Stan, while holding the bullet, that "this is this, this is not something else, this is this," is unclear to me even after much pondering. What does he mean? one asks oneself, and ultimately one's sympathy goes to Stan, who sarcastically mimics Michael. The spectator may be reminded of the novels of the dime-store philosopher Ayn Rand, which are populated by mediocre masses and one or two Übermensches who must rise above them toward the "truth," while resisting being torn down by jealous "weasels."

The first movement of the film, the wedding and related incidents through which we meet the various characters, is designed to bring us to the moment when Michael kills the deer. The subsequent events of Vietnam, the roulette games, etc., bring Michael to the second deer, which he cannot shoot because of the new seriousness with which he takes life (contrasted with the "games" Stan plays with his little pistol). The retrieval of Nick is the gap he must fill, the fulfillment of his promise to Nick, and

the realization of his desire for a whole, restored community, despite his criticisms and previous disdain, as illustrated by the argument over whether or not he will lend Stan his boots. Mike must accept his place in the community, even if it is as a leader, a possibility he is uncomfortable with, one of the many reasons he cannot face his homecoming. The film places him in the only position to be able to reunite the others.

Before discussing the scenes in Vietnam, I would like to state unequivocally that it does not matter if the actors playing Vietnamese are actually from Thailand, nor that it is a military inaccuracy to have a prisoner compound on the bank of a river, or that there were never any roulette games in Vietnam as put forth by the film. The Russian Roulette game is a metaphor, a condensation of many impulses that would extend the film's already three-hour length if they were given full artistic incidence; for example, the theme of self-destructiveness, the cruelty of other men, the emotionally volatile quality of the war situation. It is not an "intellectual" or documentary approach. Rather, emotions are communicated through violent images. What is important about the roulette game is the variety of reactions to its agony, the fact that the game is a variation on the Russian backgrounds of the principals, and that it is a parody of Michael's "one shot" ritual.

The audio flicker of a helicopter intrudes on the peaceful bar in which Welsh is playing Chopin, a logical extension of the general musicality of the whole community (it is Welsh who begins singing "God Bless America" later). With a shock cut the spectator is transported to Vietnam, apparently several years later. Michael is now a Green Beret and has been knocked unconscious by American warcraft, an indication of the confusion of the war experience. A V.C. drops a hand grenade into a village bomb shelter, and Michael, waking up and seeing the action, goes into a rage (which shows how disturbed his personality has become), leading to his incinerating the V.C. We see how far Michael has descended from his own principles with his machinegunning the charred corpse. The spectator has been thrust into a situation of confusion that has taken the three friends much longer to get to. Michael does not recognize Nick and Steve, who have landed in another helicopter. There is no time for a reunion. In long shot, through clearing smoke, the V.C. are advancing, then with another shock cut, the spectator is at the riverside stockade. While the Russian society of Clairton is presented with a varying level of sympathy, nonetheless there is no doubt that it is a positive presentation. The expansive compassion given to the Russian-Americans leaves none left over for the wicked North Vietnamese, all of whom are ruthless primitives. Clearly, if one supports the American involvement in the Vietnamese civil war there is no other way



Meryl Streep and Robert De Niro in The Deer Hunter.

to view the North Vietnamese and still sustain the energy to fight them. Though politically incorrect, perhaps it is in this way that the close Russian-Americans would see them (though at no point in the film are we given the impression that any of the incidents are seen from any particular perspective). It is not only the V.C., however; the French and the South Vietnamese are also seen as evil, immoral, corrupting, even though there is the potential for these qualities in the Clairton community. The long takes of the Clairton sequences, though leading to some rather boring transitional scenes (as in the scene where Welsh takes a piss and the others drive off) is in broad contrast to the rapid cutting and close camera placement of the Vietnam sequences, which reiterates the immoral atmosphere by our physical closeness to the principals and by the unease the editing creates.

The roulette game is the horrible and logical extension of Michael's beliefs. That he is able to fight the V.C., deceive them at their own game, shows that, on some level, he realizes himself in the cruel parody, as well as revealing his own mastery of the game and general superiority, but also his ultimate rejection of the game (he gets them to use three bullets) and the conquest of his internal need for the self-imposed ritual. Steve fails because of his inability to deal with the emotional weight of the experience, and Nick fails the human test because of the self-destructive impulses the experience releases. We follow Nick as he drifts further from humanity, from communication, first with the doctor, then with Linda, then love, and finally sex. His ceasing to be human is what keeps him alive for so long as a professional gambler. When Mike comes to retrieve him, the structure of incidents leads by association to imply that it is Nick's memory of Clairton that "kills" him; but it seems to me that the roulette game is rigged,

hence the great show of holding up the bullet, the way a magician uses misdirection to hide his necessary manipulations, and hence also the further comparison with Michael, who makes a great show of his philosophy. At any rate he is murdered, possibly to prevent the exposure of the ring by his defection (but then, why would Michael be allowed to take his body back home, much less leave the place alive himself?).

Michael tells Nick that he loves him. and it is this, plus Michael's disregard for Linda, that suggests a homoerotic connection between the two friends; that is, that his wanting to have sex with Linda is an indirect way of fulfilling his relationship with Nick. But a great deal of the film is taken up with the troubled sexuality of the characters: Steve marries a woman who apparently (it is never very clear) became pregnant by another man, Stan's need to overcompensate, and Michael's classically American flight from women; that is, his fixation on Linda is an excuse to not pursue other women. Stan openly berates Michael over the possibility of his being homosexual, his sole criterion being Michael's disinclination to fuck girls with whom Stan has set him up (we see an example of one later in the film). If he does love Nick, it is not reciprocated in the same way, and Michael does struggle to save Steve, who breaks his leg in a Deliverance-esque manner. In any event, it is not an overtly expressed theme, and there is nothing wrong with Michael telling Nick he loves him, and if such a homosexual sub-text is perceived, it reveals a certain attitude on the part of the critic who discusses it. It is interesting that the action-oriented, male-oriented artists in whom a homosexual sub-text is often seen (Hawks and Bertolucci, for example) are accused of the most violent and inhuman emotions, as if the suppression of these "tendencies" brought out overreaction and



Robert De Niro helping John Savage to escape the Viet Cong.

self-loathing. Conversely, women in The Deer Hunter are not so much treated badly as simply ignored (Stanley, though, does hit his date, rather than the man who made a pass at her, yet by virtue of the fact of the others fighting him, I don't believe his behavior is endorsed. It is consistent with his irresponsibly vain character that he would fear an encounter with a man). Stanley is the character who offsets the relationship between Michael and Nick, who indicates the quality of their commitment to each other. Michael, however, seems impatient with others, and when he finds Linda in the back of the store crying, he seems incapable of understanding and sympathizing with her. Though the meaning of the scene is apparently in the showing of the small ways in which the town is affected by the war, the look of incomprehension on Michael's face is painful, and this elegiac sadness is realized much better a little later with the dialogue in Michael's car ("Did you think life would ever turn out like this?" "No." which is slightly reminiscent of the dialogue in Tokyo Monogatari). This is another moment when the audience is alienated from Michael, yet it occurs in the middle of a significant growth period for him. What is the nature of this growth?

The whole middle section concerning Michael's return to Clairton to his attempt to rescue Nick brings Michael to a new maturity that subsequently receives several tests of strength.

1) Arriving in town he sees the home-coming party and goes to a motel instead, where he pulls out of his wallet a picture of Linda. I've suggested that he can't face being a hero. Doubtlessly there is also the feeling of separateness caused by his experiences. But also it is Linda he wants to see, not the others.

2) In the morning he goes back to the trailer as everyone else is leaving. With

Linda the first tentative moves are made for union.

3) He finds a few of his friends in town and learns that Steve is alive and in the U.S.

4) Forcing Steve's wife to give him the telephone number where he can be reached, he goes to make the call, and then gives up. He cannot yet face that uniting act. He must first become a different person.

5) Michael attempts to leave town, but Linda, with surprising honesty and forthrightness, convinces him to stay. She is prepared to make love to him, but he has fallen asleep with his clothes on (unquestionably a flight from intimacy on his part). There is a shot out the window of the room.

6) Michael and his friends go hunting. He has caught the deer, but is unable to shoot it, firing above it instead. He sits above a waterfall and yells, "OK? OK?" This is a cry of relinquishment, defeat, the first realization that he is losing hold of the rituals he previously needed to survive psychologically, the growth of a new humanity that is spontaneous, open, and vital.

7) He fights with Stan over the small pistol. He is sick of games, and sees himself in Stan. The one bullet, though obviously a working out of the roulette game, also reminds us of the one shot Michael fired into the air during the fight in the first hunting scene.

8) Back in Clairton he finds Linda weeping. Perhaps his reaction is again one of compensation; he reacts against her because, for the first time, he is drawn to her.

9) After work he catches her as she is about to leave with the vulgar singer. Her need for some comfort, even in shallow intimacy, has driven her to him. Michael takes her away.

10) The make love, presumably for the first time, tenderly, gently. Afterwards,

there is another shot of Clairton through the window, as if the city were now able to reassert itself on Michael's consciousness.

11) Early the next morning he goes into a phone booth near the church and calls Steve. He has achieved the maturity necessary to confront the challenge of reuniting his friends.

12) Upon learning from Steve that Nick is still alive, his resolve is complete. He takes Steve home and returns to Vietnam.

Though it really is not within the province of the critic to speculate on the origins of a film, and in this case especially there is no proof that I can offer to validate my theory, the fact that such people as James Toback can claim some influence on The Deer Hunter (in the Boston Real Paper Toback claims that some of his script of the Frank Costello story found its way into Cimino's film) opens the field up. The artists of the New Hollywood all know each other and talk to each other about their films. John Milius and Cimino apparently became good friends during the time it took to get The Deer Hunter off the ground. It is well known that Milius was disappointed with what Coppola did to his script of Apocalypse Now, and it is interesting to imagine the influence he may have had on The Deer Hunter, as if he were doing by proxy the Apocalypse Now that was no longer under his control. There certainly cannot be much similarity of plot; the stories as we know them are very different (though the original AN was about Green Berets). We will soon know about Coppola's film, and perhaps someday we will see the original script that Milius wrote. In mood and tone The Deer Hunter is very much like a Milius film, though I would suggest less coherent in structure. It has been noted elsewhere how much Michael, with his neatly trimmed beard and black hair, resembles an idealized Milius, and it would not be the first time Milius has been "put" in a film: he was the basis for the John Milner character in American Graffiti and the Han Solo character in Star Wars.

Of course, none of this idle speculation has any bearing on an evaluation of The Deer Hunter, unless one were attempting to show how one film worked while another did not. This said, I will admit to valuing Big Wednesday as a rich, complete work of cinematic art over The Deer Hunter. On a large scale The Deer Hunter works, but when we turn our attention to the smallscale level of individual scenes, there seems to be a sense of fullness and detail lacking, as if the most obvious possibility were seized upon without thinking out a scene (take, for example, the obvious irony of the drops of wine on the wedding gown, as well as the choral music during the hunts). Also one hopes that art, as in Tolstoi's War and Peace, while taking sides as is its prerogative, can nevertheless create in the viewer compassion out of the harsh realities it faces, and the dichotomy of moral positions it presents.

the 3rd PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

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HANARA GOZE ORIN (BANISHED ORIN)

Masahiro Shinoda's 1977 masterpiece (mysteriously called "Melody in Grey" for the U.S.) is a beautiful and intelligent film; the recently inoperative word "beautiful" regains its meaning, as seen in the exquisite photography of Kazuo Miyagawa, with his Ozu-influenced contemplations of wind-blown reeds, stormy waves, and rain-drenched flowers, and the score by Toru Takemitsu, incredible music that is organically keyed to the film's mood, as well as being a fine work on its own.

Shima Iwashita (Shinoda's wife) is Orin, a blind child taken in by a group of blind, roving Goze, but later banished by them for breaking the chastity vow. Throughout the film Orin yearns for affection and innocently assumes she can get it through sexuality; naturally society mush punish her unto death. She meets an army



Laurie Zimmer keeping cool in Assault on Precinct 13.

deserter (Yoshio Harada) who serves as her guardian during their travels, and who declines to make their relationship sexual, for he considers her Buddha. He has a run-in with some turn-of-the-century gangsters (the year is 1919), murders Orin's rapist, and is tortured to death by the army when it finally catches up with him.

Orin tries to find her old Goze mistress, but discovers that she has died. In the film's finale, a group of surveyors see in the distance Orin's red sash. There is a shot of Orin's clothes, her musical instruments, and her bones. Music, birds flying up from a tree, then a shot of the cold, blue sea, followed finally by one of the moon, and the

film is over. The forces of society have gradually built up and destroyed both of them, indifferent to Orin's supreme fragility, a fragility that makes her destruction that much more moving. The social criticism is severe, but also universal. This is not just a critique of the militarization of Japan, but also of brute insensitivity everywhere. Shinoda acknowledges the influence of Mizoguchi and Ozu, and we can see this influence, but he is also himself, a fully realized artist, the creator of this great film.

Douglas Holm

ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13

This early effort by John Carpenter shows a flair for mood and pace, but the low budget seems to tug at the corners of the film, and some elements aren't as fully realized as they seem to want to be. Carpenter shows a sure hand, the premise is clever, and the cartoon-like look of the film meshes well with the Hawks-

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ian drama, which concerns the raid by an army of gang members on a police station that is closed but for a small crew. Laurie Zimmer is beautiful in a slinky way (she gets shot in the arm without being fazed, like Joanne Dru with an arrow in Red River), her cat's eyes impatient with the indecision around her. Apparently Carpenter had trouble with her, but he has excised all traces of it. Darwin Joston is excellent as the convict who takes charge and his dialogue is witty and well delivered. The swipes from Hawks are obvious (they gave Carpenter a cult following in England), but actually, if they were not there I don't think the film would have much depth. The references don't interfere with the plotting—in fact, they sustain it—and the suspense is original and taut. As usual with Carpenter, the photography is distinctive, and the score, which he composes himself, is repetitious but adequate. Greg Reese

NICK CARTER IN PRAGUE

It is difficult to believe the same country that has given us such directors as Milos Forman, Jan Kadar, and Ivan Passer must now give us Oldrich Lipsky and his mediocre, witless, and puerile film. His 17vear career seems to have led to this exquisite moment. Carter (Michal Docolomansky) is called to Prague on a special assignment, and encounters an old nemesis who is experimenting with a carnivorous plant (animated by Jan Svankmaier in a particularly wretched manner). The one-note acting and the dull and listless photography do not help matters much, and the hommage does not remind one of Resnais and Franju so much as a placid television series. Disappointingly, Variety called the film "festival bait" and a potential "art house winner," but it resembles more definitely jail bait and a poorhouse loser.

Greg Reese

PRINCE EHTEDJAB

Prince Ehtedjab, a 1974 Iranian film directed by Bahman Farmanara, is a very atmospheric black-and-white film which recounts the final years of the last member of a proud royal family in Iran. Deeply disturbed over the loss of wealth and power which his family has experienced, Prince Ehtedjab retreats into himself. Flashbacks give insights into his childhood and gallant younger manhood, revealing the tyrannical cruelty of his grandfather (an avid hunter of game animals) and the strictness of his parents' household and persecution of servants. His beautiful and taunting wife cynically accuses him of being unable to live up to the courageous standards of his ancestors, of not having a drop of their blood in his veins. Her mockery only makes him more ill at ease in her presence and he spends a great deal of time away from the palace. But while she is slowly dying of tuberculosis, he coldly carries on a degrading affair with her maid, a game of psychological oppression, and when she is dead, he insists that the maid take on her identity, wearing her clothing, hairstyle, and make-up.

Guilt prompts the lonely, brooding prince to give alms to "liberated," mocking ex-servants as his fortune dwindles. Yet he is unable to adapt to the new social structure created by the political and economic changes at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries in the Middle East. He mourns his lost royal heritage as he wanders through shadowy rooms in his oncesplendid palace with its gradually disappearing collection of weapons, books, photographs, tapestries, stuffed animal heads, and other souvenirs and trophies. Finally in despair and poor health (possibly hereditary tuberculosis) the prince descends into the black dungeon of his own palace, symbolically signalling the death of the decadent, noble-warrior class which had been so revered in Iranian history but can find no place in the modern world.

This detailed, metaphorical study of one man's downfall gives witness to the passing



Laura Antonelli: Wifemistress.

of an era and makes more vivid and concrete the subtleties of an ancient culture radically transformed by pressures from the outside world.

Russ Island

WIFEMISTRESS

Marco Vicario's film is a slow, coming-of-age film about a wife (Laura Antonelli), a psychosomatic invalid who follows in her roving husband's footsteps (he's played by Marcello Mastroianni), coming to respect him for his intelligence, his political sympathies, and his respectful but wide-ranging sexual appetites. She learns about his life after it appears that he has died, and, taking over his career as a wine salesman, finds that his horse returns through habit to the same old haunts. Antonelli slowly becomes an "open" person, all under the voyeuristic eyes of her husband, wounded and in hiding across the street. In a reversal of her prior confinement, M.M. takes on the Jimmy Stewart role in an erotic Rear Window. She eventually finds him out, and through some psychic connection they make a "date," his arrival for which concludes the film. Lots of sex, foggy photography, lush music, the kind of film you take a date to.

Greg Reese

THE WHOLE SHOOTIN' MATCH

Eagle Pennell, in person, presented this low-budget

feature-length film about the mishaps of a couple of smalltime Texas gadget inventors whose dreams seem destined always to fail. Frank (Sonny Davis) and Lloyd (Lou Perry) are the mismatched business partners and Paulette (Doris Hargrave) is Frank's wife with whom Frank is getting alternately in and out of trouble due to his less than responsible treatment of his family. Lloyd invents a gadgety improvement on the traditional vacuum cleaner after having experienced a revelation riding through an automatic car wash. The invention works, but the patent is bought cheaply by an anonymous fly-by-night investor.

The story, written by Pennell and producer Lin Sutherland, isn't as charming as one might imagine. The comedy is dependent on our identification with the characters, yet they seem only to be roles weakly animated by character actors. There are a few endearing moments, but these are soon forgotten in the general tedium of the predictable

This being the first feature by Eagle Pennell, shot on a tight budget (\$25,000), there are many technical things wrong with The Whole Shootin' Match. Pennell, in many instances, shows he doesn't know how to set up a shot to maximize viewer interest in what is happening on the screen. There aren't, I assume because of the budget, enough insert shots; it is distressing to continually see a minute's worth of the same ill-framed shot. There are matching problems and the editing is flat and without pacing. There are exposure mistakes throughout the film, and the print is obviously an answer print-the scenes haven't been corrected for exposure. The sound is horribly recorded; much of the dialogue is garbled. All these poor technical qualities make viewing this film for entertainment nearly impossible, a situation unaided by the fact that, though clearly shot in a 1:66 or 1:85 ratio, the film (like many shown at the Portland Art Museum) was projected in 1:33, destroying the artist's original composition.

Carl Bennett

Complete Schedule of Events

The Movie House

Thursday March 15	7:30	Get Out Your Handkerchiefs
Friday March 16	7:00	Nick Carter in Prague
	9:15	Wifemistress
Saturday March 17	2:00	The Private Life of Henry VIII
	4:15	Four Feathers
	7:00	Picnic at Hanging Rock
	9:15	Dream of Passion
Sunday March 18	2:00	Nick Carter in Prague
	4:15	Wifemistress
	7:00	Thief of Bagdad
	9:15	Dossier 51
Monday March 19	2:00	Dossier 51
T - 1 11 100	7:00	MARTIN RITT Tribute
Tuesday March 20	2:00	Dream of Passion
	7:00	Women Dispised Heaving Deals
	9:15	Picnic at Hanging Rock
Wednesday March 21	2:00	Women
	7:00	Summer Paradise
Ti 1 44 1 00	9:15	Perceval
Thursday March 22	2:00	Summer Paradise
	7:00	Illustrious Corpses
F:4 - 44 - 1 00	9:15	The Sandglass
Friday March 23	2:00	Perceval
	7:00	Picture Show Man
	9:15	On the Yard
Saturday March 24	2:00	The Drum
	4:15	That Hamilton Woman
	7:00	Vilmos Zsigmond Tribute
Sunday March 25	2:00	Picture Show Man
	4:15	F.D.R.
	7:00	No Time for Breakfast
	9:15	High Street
Monday March 26	2:00	No Time For Breakfast
	7:00	Jacob the Liar
T	9:15	F.D.R. Jacob the Liar
Tuesday March 27	2:00	
	7:00	A Strange Role
Madagaday March 00	9:15	Assault on Precinct 13
Wednesday March 28	2:00	A Strange Role
	7:00	Bride of the Andes
Thursday March 20	9:15 2:00	The Crime of M. Lange Bride of the Andes
Thursday March 29	7:00	Northern Lights
	9:15	Death of the President
Friday March 30	2:00	Death of the President
riluay maich 30	7:00	Police Python 357
	9:15	Violette
Saturday March 31	2:00	The Scarlet Pimpernel
Salurday March ST	4:15	Rembrandt
	7:00	Who Has Seen the Wind?
	9:15	The Opium War
Sunday April 1	2:00	Dognesbury/Star Trek
outday April 1	4:15	Who Has Seen the Wind?
	7:00	Soldier of Orange
Monday April 9		Police Python 357
Monday April 2	2:00	Melody in Grey
	7:00	
Tuesday April 2	9:15	To be announced
Tuesday April 3	2:00	The Opium War
	7:30	The Champ

International X Show Midnight at The Cinema 21

Friday, March 16: "Gums"
Sat., March 17: "Thundercrack"
Friday, March 23: "Sebastiane"
Sat., March 24: "The Beast"
Friday, March 30: "Femmes Fatales"
Sat., March 31: "The Naked Seven"

Festival Hot Line 222-4634

Northwest Film Study Center

71 (1111 (0) ()		
Fri. March 16	7:00	Prince Ehtejab
	9:15	Everything for Sale
Sat. March 17	12:00	Prince Ehtejab
	2:00	Everything for Sale
	7:00	The Whole Shootin' Match
	9:15	Local Color
Sun. March 18	2:00	Art About Art: Warhol and
		Raushenberg
	7:00	La Vase
	9:15	Strongman Ferdinand
Mon. March 19	12:00	Local Color
	2:30	Everything for Sale
	7:00	The Opium Warlords
Tue March 20	9:15	Pleasantville
Tue. March 20	12:00	Pleasantville
	2:00	La Vase
	7:00	Northwest Film and Video
	9:15	Festival Highlights My Love Has Been Burning
Wed. March 21	12:00	My Love Has Been Burning
WOU. Maich 21	2:00	Northwest Film and Video
	2.00	Festival Highlights
Thu. March 22	12:00	The Opium Warlords
THU. WILLION ZZ	2:00	The Whole Shootin' Match
	7:00	New AFI Shorts
	9:15	Sunrise
Fri. March 23	12:00	New AFI Shorts
TII. Warch 25	2:30	Sunrise
	7:00	Jane is Jane Forever
	9:15	The Second Awakening:
	0.10	Christa Klages
Sat. March 24	2:00	The Second Awakening:
out. Maronz	2.00	Christa Klages
	7:00	Legacy
	9:15	A Geisha
Sun, March 25	2:00	Art About Art: Films of
		Joseph Cornell
	7:00	Pirosmani
	9:15	Jane is Jane Forever
Mon. March 26	12:00	Legacy
	2:00	Pirosmani
	7:00	Shadowman
	9:15	The First Time
Tue. March 27	12:00	A Geisha
	2:00	The First Time
	7:00	With Babies and Banners
		El Capitan
	9:15	Illumination
Wed. March 28	12:00	With Babies and Banners
	0.00	El Capitan
Thu. March 29	2:00	Illumination
Thu. March 29	12:00	Shadowman
		Beyond the Bridge
	7:00	No Maps on My Taps/ American Shoeshine
	9:15	Strange Letters
Fri. March 30	12:00	Shadowman
rii. Maicii 30	2:00	Strange Letters
	7:00	Winifred Wagner
	9:15	Germany in Autumn
Sat. March 31	2:00	No Maps on My Taps/
Sat. maron or	2.00	American Shoeshine
	7:00	Tracks
	9:30	Femmes Fatales
Sun. April 1	7:00	Scenic Route
	9:15	Northern Lights
Mon. April 2	12:00	Germany in Autumn
	2:00	Beyond the Bridge
	7:00	Scenic Route
	0.45	Boot of the Charts

Best of the Shorts

THE SANDGLASS

The Sandglass (1973) is a magnificent color fantasy film by Polish director Woiciech Has, who directed the surrealistic classic, The Saragossa Manuscript. It is based on a story called The Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass by Bruno Schulz, "the Franz Kafka of Poland," who died in 1942. The film's exquisite, bizarre sets beautifully recreate the eerie twilight zone at the vague boundary between dream and reality. The protagonist, Joseph, is a young man who journeys (in a silent train with a surreal cargo of allegorical objects, rubbish and weird people, possibly lunatics) to a remote sanatorium to visit his dying father. Shortly after his arrival, he learns that his father has already died, but the doctors (or "mad scientists") of the sanatorium have discovered a way to slow down time and postpone certain events. However, the management seems only sporadically concerned with the welfare of their sleepy patients, and the facilities are in a terrible state of chaos and disrepair, with crumbling walls, weedy, overgrown grounds, piles of furniture and household utensils in the dark, drafty halls and rooms, and food, wine, and scientific instruments covered with cobwebs on the dining room tables. Also, it seems the doctors cannot maintain very close control on the distortions of time they have created, a fact which has potentially disastrous consequences for the inmates and perhaps themselves.

Joseph's entry into the sanatorium's shuffled time zones calls up a rush of the interwoven phantasms of memory from his childhood and young adulthood. He is a poetic youth, serious and moralistic, who feels dutybound to his parents' dubiously successful import/export dry-goods business. His father (seen at earlier stages, before his "convalescence" in the sanatorium) seems a benevolently wild and impractical character who collects all manner of exotic junk and obscure trivia. Images of the father's crowded attic aviary are juxtaposed with Joseph's conversations with his mother, exchanges

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with customers and workers in his parents' shop, festivals of ridiculous pomp and splendor, and comical confrontations with a beautiful, erotically stimulating red-haired neighbor girl, a temptress. She appears to represent the essence of lustful female sensuality and is the willing object of romantic conquest or lustful admiration for all the men (except Joseph) who meet her, including his father. At times, a contrastingly conservative and innocent girl, possibly a fantasy projection or a sweetheart since childhood, appears in the tangled web of Joseph's memories. She is perhaps too conservative and seems to need rescue from a boring life.

Science fiction situations are created as Joseph is accompanied by himself as a child (a symbol of regression) and carries on a humorous dialogue with this embodiment of his distant, hopeful past. The child leads him into the past, through obscure parts of the sanatorium which may have been walled off at later periods in time, a symbol for repressed memories.

The Head Doctor (the only doctor in attendance) and an erotic nurse (at times partially undressed) move throughout the shadowy, decaying, mazelike interior of the sanatorium, "guiding" Joseph more deeply into confusion and self-doubt, until he is overwhelmed by his unanswered questions. Ultimately, he realizes (or fantasizes) that he has become the strange, shabby, blind railwayman, a Diogenes with lantern and logbook, whom he met on the train at the beginning of his surreal odyssey, and he wanders out into the forested grounds of the sanatorium.

The magical mood the film conjures up is sheer pleasure. For lovers of surrealist cinema, fans of *The Saragossa Manuscript*, and devotees of the study of dreams and their significance, *The Sandglass* is a "must-see" film worthy of several viewings. *Russ Island*

A DREAM OF PASSION

This dreadful film is an extended advertisement for Melina Mercouri's superhuman gifts. She is angry, temperamental, self-pitying, loving; a tender tyrant. She is performing Medea in Greece and hears of an imprisoned American woman (Ellen Burstyn) who committed a murder that resembles that of the play. Art and life imitate each other, or something. Mercouri and Burstyn begin to "merge," and to make sure we get the point, director Jules Dassin includes a ridiculous scene in which a BBC documentary director, making a film about Mercouri, shows the cast of the play and the crew of his film Bergman's Persona (unsubtitled yet-he has the film memorized). Afterwards he says things to the effect that he feels inferior to Bergman (!). The technical credits are fine, but the film has the bloated feel of a fifties television drama. And Burstyn develops a new form of acting which I'll hazard to call the "bulging eye" school.

Ken Alakine

THE STRONGMAN FERDINAND

For most filmgoers, the "New West German Cinema" is a label that identifies a few familiar works from the triumvirate of Werner Herzog, Rainer Fassbinder and Wim Wenders. This sets an imposing—perhaps unfair—standard of comparison for other West German films like Alexander Kluge's The Strongman Ferdinand.

Kluge's film is wry, entertaining and visually interesting, but it is deeply flawed by its evasion of the most troublesome and provocative implications of its subject. By contrast, what makes Herzog, Fassbinder, and Wenders major filmmakers is their acuteness in sensing and developing the richest implications of their material.

The Strongman Ferdinand focuses on the bureaucratic mentality in the person of a dogged champion of the social order. To his chagrin, he finds that his zealous services as a policeman or a security guard are not entirely appreciated; the police must observe the consti-

tution as well as capture criminals; industry is more interested in maximizing profits than perfecting security. As Ferdinand fails to realize that the industrial right does not really believe its own law-and-order rhetoric, he is inexorably driven to the fringes of society and sanity until he becomes an unwitting anarchist.

Ferdinand's situation suggests an innocent whose naïve belief in the professed ideals of a corrupt social order leads him to destruction. Unfortunately, as Kluge presents him, Ferdinand is a misguided zealot, not so much because society has become cynical, as because he is himself rather stupid. In one sequence, he conducts a "Christmas Exercise" as if he equated the problem of finding a Christmas goose with combating "the terrorist menace." A more destructive example of Kluge's willingness to subvert ideology or psychology for easy chuckles occurs when Ferdinand's libido and his professional sense of responsibility collide over an attractive woman. After he catches her pilfering, he exchanges his silence for her sexual favors and she becomes his mistress. This may be a clever joke, but it confuses the character, since the film fails to explore the relationship between Ferdinand's pragmatically cynical actions here and his fanatical devotion to dutyeventually spilling into madness-in the balance of the

Also Kluge has only an erratic feel for his central character. Through most of the film, there is little about Ferdinand to suggest a human being lurking beneath the bungling textbook bureaucrat. One striking exception is a tacky, heartbreaking visit to a lonelyhearts club. When Ferdinand dances with a chubby blonde, towering over him in a polyester blouse, their motions are mechanical and lifeless; she is even duller than he, so dull, in fact, that she cannot even recognize a joke. The sense of terminal, hopeless loneliness in this sequence is almost shattering. But it seems like an afterthought, left to carry the entire burden of establishing Ferdinand's emotional vulnerability.

Despite its shortcomings,

Ferdinand is redeemed by its minor virtues. Visually, it is quite striking; Thomas Mauch's slate-grey cinematography acutely defines the cold, inhospitable textures of the world Ferdinand inhabits. Kluge has a witty eye for expressive visual forms and details; the narrow bed, small for one person, where Ferdinand and his mistress can never be quite comfortable together; the bread that sits on a table as Ferdinand studies a map; the hopeless inadequacy of a stocking over the head to disguise Ferdinand's identity. Probably the most striking sequences in the film are the security drills; in one extraordinary long shot, figures on a ridge are elongated and distorted into ghouls in some ritual dance.

The wryly funny intersection of the seriousness of Ferdinand's manner with the staggering ineptness of his actions, is developed with deadpan understatement. The combination of dogged competence, naïve stupidity, and complete moral insensitivity he brings to actions as sinister as electronic snooping, kidnapping, industrial burglary, wiretapping, bombing, and assassination almost absolve him of culpability. Humorless, stupid, and perhaps mad, Ferdinand is very much a victim, who can neither comprehend nor accept his marginal place within the social system of which he fancies himself the devoted David Coursen champion.

THE BEAST

Polish/French director Walerian Borowczyk's film is a brilliant and erotic version of Cocteau's Beauty and the Beast. The mythology has been transformed into what might be called an allegorical study of woman's power either to transform a man into a beast or prevent him from becoming one. The mood of impending doom and of mysterious and sinister forces lurking in a splendid ancestral mansion surrounded by a dark forest is reinforced by verbal and visual references to bestiality, homosexuality, and other "perversions." A rich, scheming father believes that marriage to a beautiful young woman is the only way to prevent his shy and introverted son from sink-

ing further into depression. Lonely for the company of women, yet not sure how to behave around them, he seems to enjoy the company of animals over people. He takes great pleasure in watching horses copulate. His father has arranged a likely match for his son in a young woman who comes to the mansion accompanied by her mother. They all await the arrival of a distant cousin from the Vatican's College of Cardinals to perform the ceremony, but he refuses to participate in such unholy enterprises. The father tries to stall for time, and complications develop with his brother. Retiring to her room, erotic dream sequences occur to the girl after finding a lithograph hidden behind a mirror, portraying a woman being stimulated by a dog. The girl dreams that she is being chased through the forest by a beast, culminating in a rape sequence, in which the pleasure she finds herself experiencing startles her. She flees to the son's room to find that he is in fact a beast. She runs from the mansion followed by the son and desperate father, who thereupon meet their tragic fate. Witty and atmospheric, with alternating touches of wry and gross humor, The Beast is a masterpiece of stylized, erotic cinema. It is a multi-leveled parable, as enduring as any fairy tale. Russ Island

THE PICTURE SHOW MAN

The "picture show man" is Maurice Pym, who travels the Australian backroads in the 1920s showing movies, and The Picture Show Man is the type of movie he shows: for the small-town audiences who come to the halls and auditoriums to see Pym's Pictures On Tour, the experience is an unusual and enjoyable one and director John Power attempts to reflect that experience in the audiences who watch his film. The audience on film is enjoying a relatively new, out-ofthe-ordinary experience and the audience of Picture Show Man is enjoying a film which, in its amiably old-fashioned style, is unusual today. It must be about five reels long, but it's a two-reeler at heart.

Evidently in an attempt to interest a broader audience, Rod Taylor receives sole above-

title billing, even though his role as the villainous picture show man in competition with Pym is a minor one (about twenty minutes altogether). The star is John Meillonbriefly seen in Walkabout as the father of the two children -whose performance as Pym has more in common with W.C. Fields than just a bulbous nose. He is flamboyant and crafty, but not always sharp enough to avoid being taken for a ride himself on occasion. He is also a vagabond; Picture Show Man, like Fred Zinnemann's 1960 film about an Australian family, The Sundowners, is about people whose life is the road. Pym talks of owning a permanent picture theater, but settling down is not only unlikely (he can't hold onto money), it's not even in his nature.

Written by Joan Long, who also produced, the film is episodic, which is not inappropriate to the subject, and seems to have been cut down from something longer. The humor isn't aiming to roll 'em in the aisles, but the whimsical tone is consistent and pleasing. The visuals are airy and brightly colored; the music has a goodhumored bounce.

Though the film is deliberately old-fashioned, Meillon's performance keeps it from becoming overly sentimental (a danger which is never too close here, anyway, but it's still a cleverly balanced performance). Taylor, an Australian himself cast here as an American, plays the villain on an appropriate note-as an unpleasant but never really bad or dangerous man. There's no real plot, so there's no real climax. We leave Pym much as we found him, and as he will always be, still travelling, but there's enough humor and charm to make that a minor difficulty. There is also a good performance by the vintage projection equipment, very affectionately photographed; treated by Power with the respect due its years of valuable service.

Pat Holmes

LOCAL COLOR

Mark Rappaport's independent film is interesting but ill made, dealing with melodramatic material in a European, talk-to-the-camera style.

The acting is uniformly bad, but it is a defiant badness, a badness of rebellion and dismissal of standards. But what is telling about the project is that, though the film attempts to distance the viewer, one nonetheless becomes involved in the problems and plot and whatever else is humanly pertinent. As they pose before pointed and obvious portraits, in empty and grey sets, the actors, in their wrinkled clothing, ill-cut hair, mottled skin, and with their nervous hands and eyes, discussing their problems and dreams, the artistic vision is clear, though the realization is misled. That the film is an essay on the form and content of melodrama becomes even more clear when two characters discuss Sirk's Written on the Wind, but the ideas are ill formed, and the discussion drags on without revealing anything but the characters' own desire to fill time. In the end, however, the film is invigorating, less for what it achieves than for what thoughts (and corrections) it induces in the viewer.

Greg Reese

ON THE YARD

On the Yard is a tight, solid, and dense film of prison life, which is shown to be as rigid in its rules as life outside. The relationships between characters in the script by Malcolm Braly, from his own novel, are developed slowly with every nuance, every possible interaction worked out and realized. The principal conflict is between John Heard's Juleson, who buys cigarettes for which he has no money from Tom Waites's Chilly, who is the yard's main kingpin. The captain of the guards, Lane Smith, is out to break Chilly, and the aging con of Mike Kellin is hoping to break out, if not by parole, then ultimately, and at the last second, with a balloon made by another con. The balloon escape (a failure) is the only disconcerting moment in Raphael Silver's first directorial effort, breaking the carefully achieved tone of condensed realism, much as the fantasies in If ... get out of hand in that film's conclusion. During the course of the film, small touches reveal the qualities of affection and rebellion that are sustained

against the brutality of prison life: the prisoner who is denied his due peach at lunch and returns to take the whole bucket; Chilly putting his hand on Kellin's when the latter's parole is denied; the library inmate who gives Heard a few futile packs of cigarettes to pay back the debt to Chilly; the advice Heard gives his cellmate, imprisoned for raping his step-daughter. By presenting usually ignored aspects of prison life, for example, how things are stolen despite the presence of guards, and by the severe understatement of the acting, camera placement, muted colors and sentiment, the film manifests an admirable rigor. The prison genre is limited in possibilities, but Silver's attentive approach dissipates any potential boredom. Heard's intellectual, a misfit amongst misfits, could easily have been trite, but, among other things, his surprisingly early death produces a questioning moral climate, an invigorating experience for the viewer able to see the general in the film's specificity. Douglas Holm

PLEASANTVILLE

Pleasantville confronts the difficulties of a low budget as resourcefully as any independent feature I have seen. It begins on good footing with an excellent screenplay by Vicki Polon (Girlfriends), which manages to tell a moving story, using a minimum of main characters (three).

A young girl (perhaps 10 years old) arrives at her grandmother's home in the country for an extended summer visit. The two of them are obviously glad to be with each other, it is a beautiful summer, and the context appears at first what the title Pleasantville implies. The pleasantness, however, is to gradually become ironic. The turn of events, the external forces that come to trespass on their isolated world, are to reveal to the young girl her grandmother's deep-rooted alienation, loneliness, and fear. Through the unrelenting eyes of childhood, we witness the victimization of a woman in her old age. The woman as child becomes, in fact, the guardian of the woman who has "lived out her life," a

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protector possessed of the uncontaminated perception of childhood. The government is going to raze their house to make way for a new highway. For the child, the men from the highway department, from the supervisor who advises them politely (at first) to make plans to move, down to the road worker who comes to borrow water, are personally responsible. Her grandmother resists stubbornly, but nevertheless with the underlying "realization" that these people must do their jobs. When one of the notices arrives from the government, the granddaughter unhesitatingly stuffs it in the garbage. When the road worker comes to borrow water, she asks him, "Why do you want to tear down people's houses?" When the supervisor offers brochures for retirement villages, she screams, "She doesn't want them!" When the pressure comes to bear, the grandmother's defense is psychological; she does not want to recognize what is happening to her, while her granddaughter, seeing clearly that this woman she loves has been robbed of her strength, shields her and resists for her, confronting her grandmother's transgressors with plain accusations these adults find embarrassing and unanswerable. She will not accept the reasoning of the adult world, and succumbs finally, in the last scene with the supervisor, to the only argument that will wash with her, threat by the sheer force of the men and earthmoving machines.

The camera style is economical; the images are varied and aesthetically pleasing, there is a reason for each shot, yet the camera set ups are simple and basic and appear to have allowed room in the editing. Pleasantville represents a wise philosophy for a low-budget production: minimize practical difficulties in favor of greater creative control. Pleasantville achieves this. The hand of



Michel Deville's political "thriller" Dossier 51.

authorship is evident, resulting in a film to be highly recommended in its own right.

Garry Hood

DOSSIER 51

This popular film is actually a confused and inconsistent diatribe against "repression" presented entirely without insight. The hypersubjectivity of the long-take, POV shot is seemingly very popular in France right now, what with this film and Lelouch's Cat and Mouse, but again one must bring up the old dead horse of Robert Montgomery's Lady in the Lake (thank God he made that film-think of how many Dossier 51s it must have deterred!). Michel Deville is famous for light sex comedies like Benjamin and Raphael the Rake, and this new film is no exception; the seriousness of the theme is constantly undercut by obvious satire and low humor. Yet satirically it does nothing that hasn't been done before (Dr. Strangelove, etc.). The "mystery" of number 51 is obvious well before the conclusion, and the "hopelessness" of the pessimism is made explicit by the repetition of the first shot in the last. Greg Reese

F.D.R.

The audience in Washington, D.C., where F.D.R. was filmed during a live performance, probably enjoyed the show very much, if the cameras didn't get in the way. The script by Dore Schary, who wrote the 1960 Roosevelt film, Sunrise at Campobello, strings together a number of notable episodes which are performed with enthusiasm by Robert Vaughn. Unlike such one-man shows as

Hal Holbrook's of Mark Twain and James Whitmore's of Will Rogers, which are presented in the form of a stop on a Twain or Rogers lecture tour, this is staged as a kind of episodic drama, alternating between public appearances, conversations, and Roosevelt's addressing the audience, all in chronological order so as to provide a brief history of the Roosevelt presidency. It's a bit like Roosevelt narrating his life as president and it's also a bit cumbersome on occasion.

Director Gerald Krell tries for a documentary feeling by interspersing newsreel footage and photographs, beginning the film with footage arranged to provide an introduction to Roosevelt's election, at which point the film of Vaughn's performance begins. Several scenes involve Roosevelt's conversations with other people, none of whom appear on stage (scenes that are difficult to bring off on stage, let alone on film) into which Krell introduces photographs of the persons involved. Like Schary's script construction, it isn't entirely successful but it isn't that important, really, in something that already exists in a kind of uneasy limbo between stage and film, drama and history.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the film is that it reverses the role of the close-up, which usually increases the feeling of intimacy between character and audience. Here, the close-ups tend to remind one that this is a stage performance, with Vaughn in stage makeup, and actually serve to distance the movie audience even further. In the longer shots, Vaughn often bears con-

siderable resemblance to Roosevelt but it would have been tiresome to simply photograph the whole thing from the third row, so the problems exist (as they are bound to in something that isn't quite a film or a play). Vaughn is good, though, and movie audiences might enjoy *F.D.R.*, if the cameras don't get in the way. *Pat Holmes*

BEYOND THE BRIDGE

This 1977 Romanian film, directed by Mircea Veriov, is based on Ioan Slavici's novel, Mara, the story of an honest and devout girl, educated by nuns, who marries a student radical involved with resistance fighters in the Romanian revolt of 1848. The girl's domineering mother, a shopkeeper, opposes the marriage because the boy comes from the family of a rival business, but they persist in their unsanctioned marriage, alienating friends and family in the small Transylvania town. The stresses of conflicting social and ideological loyalties threaten them as well. Eventually the civil war comes to their town, and the young men are drafted into the army and forced to kill their own politically active friends and relatives. During a lull in the turmoil, the couple's situation seems to stabilize, and the boy's father and the girl's mother both seem willing to accept the marriage. But there are further and more tragic surprises within the family's structure...

Beyond the Bridge is a powerful, beautifully photographed portrayal of love suffering but sustaining itself against the threatening background of troubled history.

Russ Island

SUNRISE

Sunrise has an emotional force that is remarkable, achieved through an impressive use of both complex and simple filmmaking techniques. Among other things, it is a study in contrasts, not the least of which exists in the combination of simple, naturalistic story and character with the stylistic touches that made the director, F.W. Murnau, one of the giants of the German Expressionist cinema.

Sunrise runs the emotional gamut from high drama to low comedy (from attempted mur-

der to capturing a drunken pig), and the technical gamut from complex photographic effects to simple stationary shots. It combines studio sets with real locations. The world Murnau creates is one not completely limited by reality, but nowhere near total fantasy. He blends moods as skillfully as he blends light and shadow in his compositions, and juxtaposes elaborate effects with simple ones.

The film, subtitled "A Song of Two Humans," celebrates the strength of love and the spiritual bond of the family. The principal characters are known simply as The Man, The Woman, and The Woman from the City. It is not a city vs. country conflict—the titles preceding the film indicate this and the film itself makes it obvious-but one of real love vs. artificial, sensual attraction. In addition, through Murnau's visual portrayal of the two women, it becomes a conflict between darkness and light, the opposing forces represented by the vamp and the wife.

Volumes could doubtlessly be written on how a particular shot or sequence draws upon a particular feeling in the viewer, with a frame-byframe breakdown, all of which one can choose to believe or doubt (assuming one chooses to read them in the first place). After one viewing, the most obvious observation is not specifically how or why it works, but simply that it does work amazingly well. Material that might have become grossly sentimental in other hands is presented with a power clearly the result of a sincere belief, rather than just a need to fulfill the demands of a formula. The ending of Sunrise, for instance, is not predictable (we are prepared for more than one possibility), but it feels right when it happens; no jarring adjustments have been made to accommodate it.

Besides the screenplay by Carl Mayer (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*) and the cinematography of Charles Rosher and Karl Struss, invaluable contributions are made by George O'Brien and Janet Gaynor as the husband and wife, in performances surprisingly subtle for a silent film. (O'Brien's one exaggerated



A hunger-inducing scene from Summer Paradise.

scene—when he nearly resembles Frankenstein's monster as he is about to kill his wife—is acceptable because the character is quite literally not himself. Murnau intends for us to see the monster inside everyone and reportedly went so far as to put lead weights in O'Brien's shoes to create a lumbering movement that would enhance the illusion.)

Speaking of illusions, a couple of memorable ones: A tracking shot as The Man goes to the marsh to meet The City Woman begins by moving with O'Brien, following him long enough for us to assume we are still with him even when he leaves the frame. We believe we are beside or ahead of him -in any case, that the shot is subjective-until we emerge from some trees and see The City Woman, holding on her until O'Brien emerges from the side of the frame and some distance away, totally unexpected. The Man's appearance, along with the complicated path the camera has tracked, has us totally disoriented, just the proper feeling for the situation. Later in this same scene a panning shot takes us not only from the country to the city, but also from reality to fantasy. When we return from The Man's crazed vision, we see the vamp doing a frenzied dance in front of him in the dreamlike surroundings of the marsh. The scene has a demonic intensity that adds to our association of The City Woman and dark, unnatural forces.

Murnau makes good use of irony, as with the city, for example, which The Man meant to visit with the vamp after killing his wife, which becomes a source of gaiety and pleasure. It might have become the site of The Man's spiritual demise, but is instead the place where his love is restated.

Pat Holmes

SUMMER PARADISE

The director of Summer Paradise, Gunnel Lindblom, is an actress who has appeared in such Ingmar Bergman films as The Silence and The Virgin Spring. The script is by Lindblom and Ulla Isaksson, who wrote The Virgin Spring. The producer is Bergman himself and members of the cast have appeared in his films. It must have been like old home week making the film, which might explain why it seems so much like a home movie, though not why it is no more enjoyable than Lulu's fourteenth birthday or Grandma and Grandpa at Yellowstone.

Technically, the film might be something Aunt Matilda took with the Super-8 in the backyard last weekend, without the visual extravagances which often characterize amateur work (and which this film could use). The sound is poor enough (it has an unreal, disembodied quality) to suggest that the filmmakers advocate a return to the days when sound was placed on a record to be played with the film. This tends to add an element of worry to viewing it, as if the record would begin to skip and the film would progress while we hear water splashing over and over or a particularly ponderous bit of dialogue repeated eternally.

Much of the dialogue is ponderous, by the way; just one reason for the film's inability to rise much above its technical seediness. The situa-

tion is, of course, Bergmanesque. In this case it's the one about a family-four generations here-gathering for the summer at their country home, where they eat a lot, make merry, and flay each other to the bone. If one approaches the film with no knowledge of its subject or its makers (which is unlikely; this isn't the kind of film people just stroll in blindly off the street to see), the irony of the title might be surprising rather than predictable. The woman who organizes the gathering (a middle-aged doctor played by Birgitta Valberg, the second generation of the four we see) finds her idyllic retreat as well as her family crumbling under forces from within and without.

The film might have had the virtue of consistency if Lindblom had simply concerned herself with the family relationships instead of introducing her social conscience, and doing so in a scattered, random style that achieves no force of its own except as a disruptive influence. For example, three friends of the family join the group at different times: a frazzled social-worker who is an old friend of the doctor, and a dark, morose young woman who brings her violent, withdrawn son. These three characters never amount to more than Lindblom's attempts to pump things up with social relevance (the child is disturbed, his mother is a radical and a lesbian, the social worker is given to ranting on a variety of subjects) and are as disruptive to the film itself as they are to the family holiday.

Lindblom shows affection for her characters, who are generally well portrayed by a cast unfamiliar enough to provide a sort of naturalism for non-Swedish audiences, but many of the characters go almost unnoticed and sadly undeveloped (and at least one of them, a quiet young man obsessed with the Vietnam news on TV, figures importantly in the film's climax). It took a number of films to make Ingmar Bergman the great director he is recognized to be. Lindblom tries to mix several for her first effort and the result is mostly a mess. We've had enough ersatz Bergman from Bergman the last few der to capturing a drunken pig), and the technical gamut from complex photographic effects to simple stationary shots. It combines studio sets with real locations. The world Murnau creates is one not completely limited by reality, but nowhere near total fantasy. He blends moods as skillfully as he blends light and shadow in his compositions, and juxtaposes elaborate effects with simple ones.

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years without having to get it from other directors as well.

Pat Holmes

BRIDE OF THE ANDES

Over-long, indifferently photographed, inadequately acted, achingly slow paced, an unsympathetic and grating combination of actors (Japanese) and locals (Peru), repetitious, geared to anthropology students rather than aesthetitians, this 1966 film directed by Susumu Hani and starring Sachiko Hidari, is about the new bride of a scientist studying in the Andes. Clash of cultures, etc. Greg Reese

JANE BLEIBT JANE

Two veteran German filmmakers, Walter Bockmayer and Rolf Buhrmann, have collaborated to create a warm, innocuous film with Johanna Koenig playing Johanna, an old woman who fantasized that she is Jane, the tree-mate of Tarzan. She covers the walls of her room in a home for the elderly with posters of Tarzan, wears a leopard-skin outfit with black boots, buys a parrot and stuffed monkey, and imitates the jungle with a collection of oversized plants. She visits the zoo where she calls the elephant by name and eludes the company of the other old people who cannot understand her and who, as a result, ridicule her. So convinced is Johanna that she really is Jane, that we are almost forced to take her seriously.

We have here an interesting film, one which could potentially make a statement about the insensitivity of people, but it doesn't quite make it. Johanna remains true to her character, but of the other elderly, none seems to come across as a real person. They make the motions, but their character development is weak. The pacing, as seems to be the case with many of the new wave German films, is slow in places. When Johanna

reads the story of Tarzan from a comic book it becomes an endless recital. The scene in the pet store where she buys the parrot leaves an unwelcome taste in the mouth as we are forced to watch the long, drawn-out drama of a python consuming its dinner. The stark visual style lends itself well to the feeling of alienation that Johanna must feel from her fellow house-mates, the actual space on the set representing the distance between characters.

Whatever else can be said for the film, it does have a basic honesty, reflected in the performance of Johanna Koenig as Jane.

Maggie Van Rossum

LA VASE

Literature and film have probably nowhere such a close parenthood as in France, where writers becoming involved in the cinema are not the exception. After Robbe-Grillet, Beckett, Genet and Peyrefitte, here comes Ionesco, screenwriter and main actor of his own film.

Although produced in Switzerland in 1970, La Vase was launched in France only in 1973, and, although privately shown in Oregon once last year (see Spectrum, vol. 2, n.1, Spring 1978, for the interview with Ionesco during that event), it is still unreleased in this country. The copy presented at the Festival was in the original French and the English text was graciously read simultaneously by Prof. Margaret Blades of Reed College.

The director, Heinz von Cramer, had an easy task, since the film dialogues, such as published by Gallimard (Paris, 1971), constitute an almost complete and very detailed shooting script. The edited version of the film differs only slightly from the written text. Ionesco divided his page into three columns: dialogue, image, sound. The dialogue (in fact a monologue) has been respected, the image follows Ionesco's directives and, as to music, Wolfgang Dauner did not have any trouble in respecting Ionesco's wishes by finding adequate sources of sound for expressing them. The voice of the actor (Ionesco, again) is pre-recorded and



Eugene Ionesco: La Vase.

almost always sounds off. This technique, probably borrowed from Godard, finds its source in the theory of the "discrepant" as defined by Isidore Isou in his *Esthetique du cinema* (Paris: Ur, 1953). It gives an ironic objective taste to an otherwise subjective narrative.

The extraordinary challenge of La Vase is that one laughs during practically the whole film, although the topic of the film is the same metaphysical anguish that Ionesco has developed in his theatrical and prose works. Other recurring obsessions are the process of accumulation (of letters, of empty bottles, etc...like the furniture in Le nouveau locataire), the exaggeratio ("the weather has been bad for the last few years..."), the proliferation of forms and bodies (the ever-growing corpse in Comment s'en debarrasser finds here an equivalent in the expansion of the liver), nostalgia for the past and for youth ("once my awakenings were always triumphs"), the sense of impotence ("the lead of my body"), are among the usual components of his thought.

The real concern of lonesco, however, is his customary metaphysical search for a reason for living or surviving. He does not find any more reasons for dying than for living, like his friend, the philosopher Cioran, who said, "I do not understand why that film was not chosen as a piece of clinical study by psychologists, since it is the best study of depression ever filmed." But the depression, and all negative

thoughts, are forgotten, surpassed, or sublimated by the nostalgia that inevitably leads the spectator to the Eden of his own distant youth, by the hope that a sudden or short return in time would become possible, by the acceptance of the joys of the present moment ("One should not despise the moment, one should love it. One should be at ease in it."). Perhaps one can start again. Perhaps we are but the links of an eternal chain. Perhaps man is not totally destitute and there are other horizons. In Le Solitaire a ladder is proposed as a way of escaping, or at least as a sign from Heaven, while in La Vase the actor accommodates himself in the mud, mixing with elements. dust on dust. The character seems destroyed, but perhaps there will be a resurrection.

The camera work looks at times amateurish and academic, but it is perhaps deliberately so, not only out of respect for the script, but also in order not to distract the spectator from observing Ionesco's interpretation, consistently magnificent. He is a born actor. Among the good scenes, the introductory one is perhaps the director's contribution, since it is not contained in the script. For several minutes we see Ionesco in front of the mirror trying costumes and wigs. Not only is it an introduction to the great versatility of the actor. but it is a show of the expressivity of Ionesco's talent. It takes a clown, but a great one, to tell men the truth about their destiny, even their lack Pietro Ferrua

THE SECOND AWAKENING OF CHRISTA KLAGES

This directorial debut of Margarethe Von Troitta is based on a true incident: a bizarre, but heart-warming crime. Three young people (a woman and two men) rob a bank to secure money for the financially floundering day care center operated by the woman, Christa Klages (Tina Engel). They manage to pull off the robbery in modern-day "Robin Hood" style only to find themselves unable to pass the money along to the center. Christa, her friend Ingrid (Silvia Refle) who joins her in exile, and the bank teller (Katharina Thalbach), who relentlessly searches for her, form a triangle of women awakening to social consciousness.

The feminist tone is guidelined by the manner in which the male characters are quickly relegated to the past. One is captured immediately following the crime, the other is later shot. The final confrontation between Christa and the bank teller is as inevitable as is the outcome.

Tina Engel's characterization of Christa Klages is generally good. The film is well organized, interesting, but most disappointing in that it falls short of its almost implicit promise. Had the character of Lena, the bank teller, been allowed to develop, we might have gained an insight into her motivation to be a self-designated judge. She ultimately has the power to accuse or acquit Christa, and her feeling of responsibility for the loss of money as well as her growing concern for justice, in counterpoint to the bank manager who attempts to defraud the insurance company, evinces the portrait of a woman becoming aware of herself and of her capabilities. It is unfortunate that her relationship to the protagonist is allowed to fade away quietly at the end. Maggie Van Rossum

NORTHERN LIGHTS

One admires the ambition that led Ron Nilsson and John Hanson to make this film while not really liking the film itself. The editing, camerawork (by Judy Irola), and acting all show a firm footing, but the tale itself, of the early days of unionizing in North Dakota, is slow paced and rather cliché ridden, and surrounded by the bookends of documentary footage of an 80-year-old union man whose radical optimism grates on the nerves with other aspects of the film's loose-tie, rolled-up sleeves mentality. The cast is fine, with Robert Behling playing the young man who slowly (very slowly) becomes involved in union work, and Susan Lynch as his wife, upset by the disruption his work causes in their private life. One thinks of F.I.S.T., and though this was an especially bad movie, one realizes how much Northern Lights tends to shy

away from drama, tension, and conflict. Ken Alakine

POLICE PYTHON .357

Even before we see the policeman Marc Ferrot, played by Yves Montand, we know a good deal about him. The credits appear over closeups of bullets being made, dinner being cooked, utensils washed, and the gun of the title being readied for action. The care for the gun is mixed in matter-offact style with normal everyday duties. The gun is a natural part of his life; not so much part of his attire as part of his body, his being. We get a brief look at his apartment and see Spartan quarters with only one area that might be called "homey"-the tool bench where he keeps and services his guns. It's obvious that his job is important. Before long we find out it's everything.

Later in the film, someone refers to Ferrot as "a tough one ...all closed up." The description is accurate. He is dedicated not only to his job but to doing it himself, a natural result of the self-dependence he learned as a child (he was an orphan) and has practiced ever since. As the film progresses the strength of his self-reliance is demonstrated, as well as the potential for self-destruction that is a part of it.

Director Alain Corneau, who also co-scripted, uses the traditional Hitchcock "wrong man" plot within the framework of a police drama to create an unusual, absorbing thriller. Ferrot must investigate the murder of a young woman with whom, unknown to anyone, he has been having an affair. Ferrot knows the girl was involved with another man but does not know the man was chief of police as well as being the murderer. The girl and the chief have never been seen together, but Ferrot has let his cop's guard down on occasion-love being a new and confusing experience for him-and has provided clues and possible witnesses, all of which point to him as the killer. In charge of the investigation, he must hunt for the real killer alone while leading the official hunt for himself.

The plot is complex, but Corneau develops it with clarity and precision. The scenes in

which Ferrot must report his progress to the chief have a nice edge because of what each man does and doesn't know-Ferrot knows he is innocent and must find the real killer. and the existing evidence will lead to him, while the chief knows he himself is the real killer and needs Ferrot to find someone to pin it on. The chief, persuaded by his wife not to turn himself in, begins to draw a kind of perverse enjoyment from the situation when descriptions of the murder suspect obviously apply to someone else. Of course, neither policeman suspects the other of

In addition to the irony of the dedicated cop leaving clues that could implicate himself, Corneau has a nice device in Ferrot's use of normal police work to avoid confrontations with witnesses who might have seen him with the girl. (At one point, on the way to meet a witness who can identify him, he responds to a call for assistance at a demonstration outside a factory. Trying, intentionally unarmed, to break up the demonstrators, he is beaten up and sent to the hospital, thus cancelling the meeting with the witness.) Fate takes increasingly grim turns, however, revealing the qualities of desperation and self-destruction which were always a part of Ferrot.

Corneau and cinematographer Etienne Becker employ a restrained, straightforward visual style which balances the plot complexities. Georges Delerue's score is an eerie departure from his more characteristically lyrical work. The plot is cleverly developed and good plotting is both a rarity and a pleasure these days; the bizarre turns never seem forced but grow naturally from the principal problem just as Ferrot's behavior-he takes some violently desperate measures later in the film-does from his basic nature.

Montand is, of course, one of the film's foremost virtues. His art, like Tracy's or Mitchum's, is not so much acting as being. He has natural authority and enough presence to dominate the screen simply by appearing on it. Here he makes Ferrot's desperation as clear as his strength; makes the "closed up" cop accessible and

sympathetic. His wife, Simone Signoret, plays the police chief's wife, almost a variation on Lady Macbeth, in a brief, effective characterization as a woman who shows, at first, greater strength than her husband only to disintegrate under pressure.

I was a little worried the ending might indulge in an irony similar to that in, for example, Robert Aldrich's Hustle, Burt Reynolds' cop, on his way to join his girlfriend for a much-needed leave of absence after solving the important case, is killed in a holdup. Ferrot makes a dangerous gesture at the end (not related to the murder case), but instead of an ironic, and dramatically disappointing, death, Corneau draws one more person into the web. The young officer frequently assigned to assist Ferrot has to make a decision that involves stepping into the shadowy areas he, a man we have seen to be religious and possessed of rigid notions of right and wrong, would rather not acknowledge. It's a solid ending which doesn't violate the gloomy, fateful atmosphere the film has maintained. The final shot, in fact, is a bleak, harsh, uncomforting sunrise, providing anything but the sense of a soothing conclusion. Pat Holmes

PIROSMANI

This 1971 film is Russian director Georgi Shengelaya's second feature film, a compassionate study of the life and art of the primitive Georgian artist Niko Piromanashvili. He was born in 1862 and died of alcoholism and starvation in 1919. The film is a series of emotionally low-key tableaux based on pivotal incidents in the painter's life, such as his escape from a wedding arranged by relatives. The visual look of the film is based on Pirosmani's own work, using impressionistic pastel color schemes blended with sharp contrasts of light and dark tones, and simple and suggestively posed subjects such as peasants and farm animals and bland and peaceful surroundings. By using an emotionally muted style there is a concentration on the external world the artist sees without intruding into his creative mental processes or speculating

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on psychological conflicts and motivations, allowing the audience to make its own connections between events in the artist's life and the images he recorded, and transcending the level of documentary, where the artist is presented as a twodimensional case history.

Throughout the film Pirosmani's paintings appear on the walls of taverns, stores, and homes, sold or bartered for food, frink, and lodging, and, more often than not, considered mere decoration. His work, however, did attract the attention of several critics and artists who tried, unsuccessfully, to have his paintings accepted in "officially recognized" art circles. But rejection of this kind, despite his brief periods of optimism and selfconfidence, only tended to intensify Pirosmani's loneliness. Finally, he is shown, shortly before his death, neglected and impoverished, living in a small, cold, street-level compartment under a stairway. Ironically, the actor who gives such a sensitive portrayal of Pirosmani, Avandil Varazi (also the film's art director), was himself a gifted painter whose work was rejected by the official union of Soviet artists. He died of alcoholism in early Russ Island

L'HOMME SANS VISAGE

Georges Franju's 1974 film is, like Judex, another homage to the work of silent series director Louis Feuillade, though some Langian Dr. Mabuse creeps in, taking the form of disguises, zombies, and underground lairs (or were the Mabuses influences by LF?). The audience is never shown the real face of the film's villain, who is caught in a secret struggle with the Knights Templar. Jacques Champreux's script moves breathlessly but episodically, and the cast, which includes Champreux, Gert Frobe, and Josephine Chaplin, are all adequate to the film's token bid for realism, but Gayle

Hunnicut's stylized movements distinguish her as superior to the general flatness of the cast, including L'homme himself. The film's set piece and best scene features her, who, as the villain's close and silent partner, has the special assignment of creeping across Parisian rooftops. In her black tights, an obscure blow-gun tucked into her boot, she glides past skylights, arms outstretched in the silent film tradition. She is trapped, however, and escaping puts her in the position of ruthlessly knifing an old woman. The police dash by, Hunnicut hiding her tights behind a bed sheet. The old woman's arm falls from the hiding place, with a thick trickle of blood seeping down, which seemingly hypnotizes Hunnicut, who stares down in lush close-up as angelic, romantic music plays over. The cutting here is eccentric in terms of suspense, but glorious in terms of its balance of zombieism, bloodlust, pursuit, and fatality. But the rest of the film is as flat as its characters, unfortunately, and rather disappointing to those who remember the harsh visuals of previous Franju films.

Greg Reese

THE FIRST TIME

Claude Berri's frankly autobiographical film is insipid and uninspired. It chronicles for the umpteenth time the sexual awakening of a (in this case) particularly unattractive young man. Berri brings no insight, no originality, and especially no charm, to the plight and frustrations of his cinematic self. After a series of crises and realizations, the young man resubmerges himself into the warmth of his family, led belligerently by Charles Denner. Charm is a necessary ingredient for such self-indulgent works, and though the film struggles with great but fruitless audacity for this quality, it remains as graceless as the leads are unmemorable. Charm smooths out the excesses of youth, making them palatable to an audience which may prefer to forget its own early indiscretions. Truffaut's films, despite the attacks directed at them, contain this sweet mixture of sophistication and innocence. Because he is charged with being a stylist in



Blanchfleur (Arielle Dombasle) in Rohmer's Perceval, to be discussed at length in a future issue.

search of a subject, one is inclined to forget his superiority over most of his contemporaries. Berri's film brings forth this realization. Not only is it a matter of stylistic creativity, but a matter of sensibility as well. Truffaut is free of the debilitating constraints of film rules. His editing and camera placement is vigorous and original—he can do anything. And through his style his passion can affect the viewer with the movement of his artistry. Berri is a dull schoolboy unable to communicate any universality in his woes and self-absorption. He is unable to alter his biography to meet the demands of dramatic interest. Other characters fail to capture his attention for very long. He seems unaware of variety in pacing and construction, rendering the "feel" of the film much like an old magazine in a doctor's office, or a sickly margarine spread uniformly over one long slice of white bread. I'd rather have a French Ken Alakine

THE OPIUM WAR

Inevitably, the primary interest of *The Opium War* is cultural. After all, the first Chinese film broadly released in the West since the Revolution is clearly an important historical artifact. Further, the subject of the film, imperialism seen from the perspective of its victims, is also historically interesting.

As an historical epic made by the non-whites stereotyped in so many American films, The Opium War has a sense of role reversal that is almost shocking. The British villains speak only Chinese, even among themselves, and, given their plot function and level of moral complexity, they might as well be Hollywood Indians.

What makes this particularly interesting is that, even in recreating an historical event where imperialism was at its most immoral—the British waging war to protect their right to push drugs-the film is surprisingly evenhanded. The British are never cruel, malicious, or grotesque. As believers in imperialism they are misguided and childlike-even savage or heathen-in their moral ignorance, but their evil actions are motivated far more by mistaken economic beliefs than by any racial inclinations to savagery. This hardly makes them benevolent, but compared to the treatment of Orientals in a contemporary film like The Deer Hunter, The Opium War is remarkably restrained in villifying its western dopedealers.

Not surprisingly, the film is characterized also by ideological clarity. Though the Gang of Four apparently disapproved of its treatment of the "cult of personality," the film's attitude toward leaders is remarkably equivocal. The central character is intelligent. resourceful, and sympathetic, but he is also clearly misguided in placing loyalty to a leader, the Emperor, above the welfare of the country. In dress and position, the "hero" is at several points in the film visually linked to his fellow members of the Chinese ruling class. The inescapable suggestion is that "personal" leadership, even of the most benevolent kind, inevitably implies the possibility of the

misuse of power by the misguided or the corrupt.

By contrast, the collective will of the people is never wrong. Whether capturing a fleeing British smuggler or building and mounting cannons for the defense of their homeland, the people (men and women, side by side, in full equality) are unconquerable. Finally, as the leader docilely follows the Emperor's command and rides off into exile, the masses defeat the British in a stirring battle scene.

The difference between The Opium War and most American films is enormous. Even a certified Hollywood "liberal" like Fred (High Noon) Zinneman almost invariably focuses on an heroic individual; the wisest thing the masses are capable of doing is accepting his leadership. (Herbert Biberman's 1953 Salt of the Earth is an exception to this rule, but it was made primarily by blacklist victims.)

The Opium War's concern with ideology separates it from western films in another way as well, since, for the Chinese, the historical drama is the real, rather than merely the apparent, subject of the film. In a Hollywood production like Nick Ray's early disaster pic, 55 Days at Peking, also about Chinese efforts to curb imperialism, the historical events are merely pretexts for the exploration and development of interpersonal relationships. In The Opium War, from the moment a husband takes money from his wife to use in an opium den, it is clear that the welfare of the individual is completely subordinate to, and dependent on, the successful resolution of the political struggle.

Unfortunately, at least as of 1963, the Chinese film industry had not found a way to circumvent the need for a "cult of personality" to give a film dramatic focus. The Opium War's story is told in a pedestrian, predictable fashion. Some of the colors and pageantry are spectacular, but the moral issues are too clear-cut for the kind of complexity or ambiguity that could make the film dramatically compelling. The British here are no more likely to succeed than the Indians were in Hollywood. Working within comparable constraints,

individualistic directors, actors, or writers often discover creatively stimulating variations in generic formulas; The Opium War's collective creation seems to have foreclosed that possibility. The film was produced by the Shanghai Film Studio, but, for all the difference in ideology and intention, in some respects it bears an uncanny resemblance to the impersonal fare long manufactured by that collective creative process known as the Hollywood studio David Coursen system.

SOLDIER OF ORANGE

Paul Verhoeven has put together an interesting variation on what might be considered an American film form. Although the Americans aren't the only people who have made World War II pictures, this Dutch film has a distinctly American feel to it.

We are introduced to some of the characters in the opening, which takes place at a college fraternity freshman initiation. German force has risen to the point that England declares war on Germany. The announcement is not given much notice by the characters, and for the most part we assume the Dutch people aren't concerned. But then bombings from the Germans occur as they push into The Netherlands. The main character, Eric, and his friend Gus, attempt to volunteer for the Dutch Army, comically enough both of them in tuxedos. Very soon the Army falls to German occupation, before the Dutch had a chance to put up a fight.

The group of friends (we see them gathered together in Eric's apartment for a group photo) are eventually splintered by the war. Gus, the suave, moustached man, begins working in the Underground, photographing German positions for the English. Robby sets up a radio post in his house at great risk to himself and his fiancée, Esther. Alex, who was a member of the Dutch Army, finds that his parents, of German extraction, were being held by the Dutch (until the occupation), whereupon he joins with the German forces. John, the boxer, gets involved in an Underground transfer of information and is captured, tortured, and eventually killed by the Germans. Nico is an organizer, a planner for the Dutch Underground, who decides to stay in his country, while Eric, the main character, is smuggled out to England under the Germans' noses.

At first fear for himself, a concern for not getting involved in things that seem larger than himself, keeps Eric away from constant invitations to join the Underground. Eric would rather be like his friend, Jacques, who is intent on waiting the war out until he can continue his studies without German control, and set up a business. Eric eventually bends to the pleas of what he comes to consider those of his country; to work from the inside, in whatever small capacity, to defeat the Germans.

A series of successful and unsuccessful plots, captures, tortures, escapes, and betrayals, commence. Eric escapes with Gus to England, where they are put in the service of the exiled Dutch queen and a wry Dutch minister. Eric and Gus become key instruments in Dutch/English espionage against the Germans in Holland, not realizing they are part of what is only a decoy operation. Not only do the Dutch fall to the Germans early in the war, the English don't seriously consider them to be a realistic resistance front.

The destruction of individuals in wartime is emphasized by the fate of several members of the group of friends. John is killed by the Germans: Alex is drawn into the German ranks and is an Iron Cross recipient who nearly betrays Eric's presence in Holland when they accidentally meet; Robby, discovered by the Germans, because he wants to protect his Jewish fiancée, Esther, is forced to betray the Dutch Underground many times; and emphasized particularly in the final movement that Gus and Eric are involved with smuggling key people back to England.

Gradually the friendly forces defeat the Germans and the Queen and Eric come back to Holland in triumph. The Dutch are jubilant, but the victory is soured for Eric, who begins to piece together information about the fates of his friends. Gus, Robby, Alex,

and John are dead. Esther has had her head shaved for collaborating with the Germans, and Jacques, who in essence represents the majority of the Dutch people, has been waiting in his apartment for the war to end and to be allowed to return to his studies; to live life as if there had never been a war.

The story has been pared down to its necessary, although still quite long, running time, and is shot in the rather straightforward style of the films of the early forties, which contributes to its grasping the flavor of the period. Casting and acting thoughtfully create Soldier of Orange's artistic harmony. Carl Bennett

ILLUSTRIOUS CORPSES

Francesco Rosi's taut and intricate political/conspiracy thriller, based on the Sciascia novel Il Contesto, is a brilliant and disturbing, though pessimistic, film. Lino Ventura is the inspector, investigating the assassination of several magistrates, judges, and prosecutors, harried, misguided (at one point he believes that Max von Sydow's chief Magistrate is the next victim and goes to warn him-Sydow seems in on the whole thing, though eventually he is assassinated as well). and eventually knocked off by the conspirators, a shipbuilder and the military, because he knows too much. The sequence of events takes many sharp and confusing turns, creating a chilly sense of all-pervading corruption, and Rosi's implied solution is much more sweeping than one might expect. The international cast, including Fernando Rey, Max von Sydow and Tina Aumont, is excellent, and Pasquale de Santis's photography is rich in harsh and gritty colors. Ventura's wrinkled character, slowly becoming desperate to reveal the truth he has discovered, is a subtle and evocative portrayal. Greg Reese

GERMANY IN AUTUMN

Germany in Autumn is a documentary produced by members of the New German Cinema (which includes Böll, Fassbinder, and Kluge) as a fictionalized record of public reaction to the terrorist events of September and October of 1977. The film begins with

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footage of the funeral of industrialist Hanns Martin Schleyer, who was the head of the Federation of German Industries until kidnapped and killed by members of the Red Army Faction. The RAF was associated with the Baader-Meinhof group of terrorists and had demanded that eleven political prisoners be released and flown to political asylum in another country or Schleyer was to be killed. Three of those prisoners, Andreas Baader, Gundrun Ensslin, and Carl Raspe, committed suicide hours after news was released of the capture of the terrorists who hijacked a Frankfurt-bound Lufthansa jet to Mogadishu, Somalia. It is with the Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe funeral that the film ends.

The bulk of Germany in Autumn is a fictionalized account of the effect the above events had in both emotional and political terms on the people of such a highly industrialized country as Germany. A series of loosely connected dramas and documentary footage explores the emotional and psychological effects news of the extremely well-executed kidnapping of Schleyer and of the suicides by the terrorists inside their maximum security cells of Stammheim prison in Stuttgart.

A particularly effective segment tells of the extreme trouble friends had in finding a proper burial site for the three dead terrorists, and equates their trouble to the story of Antigone in a scene where a television editorial board is putting brakes on a production of the play because they read a call for political subversion into Sophocles' account of Antigone's defiance of decreed law to bury her dead outcast brother. The editorial board decides that the production is too timely, insists they are not exercising censorship by agreeing to finish the production, only to air it at a later, more politically stable, time.



Lino Ventura shaking up a suspect in Rosi's Illustrious Corpses.

Germany in Autumn was not put together to be aesthetically pleasing; it was necessary for the filmmakers to finish the product while the content was still pertinent. Unfortunately, due to their haste, much of the first part of the film, a section dealing with two roommates mulling over the significance of the events, is so underlit that one suffers eyestrain attempting to distinguish a character's dark clothing from the dark background. At times the editing is unclear, due to taking a jumble of material and piecing it together. This makes more than one dramatized section hard to follow. Germany in Autumn requires more than passive interest in either the filmmakers, the subject matter, or contemporary German politics to be of interest.

Carl Bennett

TRACKS

Tracks is probably most interesting for the way it anticipates The American Friend in its suggestive use of Dennis Hopper's craggily chiseled American Gothic features. Hopper is certainly not a star, and probably not even much of an actor, but there is something profoundly expressive in the nervous, fidgety way he occupies, and perpetually threatens to vacate, screen space. Further, his sense of perpetual discomfort is emphasized with unimpeachable-if sometimes irritating—cinematic logic.

Tracks's director Henry Jaglom here, as in his previous A Safe Place (virtually undistributed despite the presence of Jack Nicholson, Orson Welles, and Tuesday Weld in the cast)

attempts to focus on the subject of neurotic dissociation and instead wanders off into incoherence. Here, however, the excursion is not without its points of interest. A Safe Place was almost totally self-indulgent in playing the old "Illusion vs. Reality" riff; Tracks, through most of its running time, stays close enough to observed reality to establish an intelligible framework for its subjective sequences.

Hopper plays a Vietnam vet escorting a coffin on a crosscountry train trip. Along the way, he encounters an oddball collection of fellow-travelers. In retrospect, some of their shticks seem contrived, but as the film is unfolding there is a certain appealing quality to several of the performances. Midway through the film, Hopper has the first of a number of hallucinatory fantasies; diverting up to a point, these recur with increasing frequency until, sure enough, we're caught in that "Illusion vs. Reality" confusion ourselves. Worse, Jaglom has one of the more bizarre fantasies turn out to be real, presumably to make the obvious point that the world is as crazy as the character.

There is something almost perverse in Jaglom's refusal to respect the conventions of narrative filmmaking. Despite his presumption in attempting to develop new cinematic forms, there is evidence that he lacks the competence to exploit the old ones effectively. The film's temporal sense is jarring and arbitrary; nights that must seem endless to the character whose reality the film ostensibly reflects pass abruptly. Several

exchanges of dialogue include close-ups and two-shots that simply do not match each other in visual tone. The result is that these sequences, too, are "subjective." Finally, it becomes difficult not to suspect that, to paraphrase Andrew Sarris, in Jaglom's case, subjectivity is the last refuge of incompetence.

David Coursen

FEMMES FATALES

Originally titled Calmos, Femmes Fatales was directed by Bertrand Blier between Going Places and Get Out Your Handkerchiefs. The perversity of its conception and the hysteria of its sexual paranoia partially explain its failure to secure general distribution. Something of Femmes Fatales's wildly humorous tone is suggested by a plot summary: When the sound of a patient scratching her pubic hair disturbs his lunch, a gynecologist flees his office. Outside, he meets a pimp equally fed up with women. The two pals run away together to seek celibate relief in the country, where they find their greatest pleasures in eating and drinking. Shortly, their sexually voracious wives reclaim them. When even a headache cannot excuse the doctor from his sexual duties, he runs away again. In a subway car, he is threatened by hordes of beautiful women. Finally, he is shown in a long shot, emerging from a tunnel; he meets his pal, coming out of an adjoining tunnel, and, as the two march away from the city, they are joined by a growing mass of disillusioned men. A literalization of the cliched "war of the sexes" follows, complete with women in tanks and uniforms. Captured, the two men are made to service an endless stream of horny women, until, exhausted by the task, they are discarded. Prematurely aged by the experience, they flee to a remote land inhabited by giants. They wander into what they take to be a cave; it turns out to be a giant's vagina, and, at the film's end, the men are inside as a man begins making love to the

Particularly in its funny first half, the film functions simultaneously on several levels. Most obviously, it is a straight hallucinated extension of male fears of female sexuality like the *Strangelove*ing belief that women seek to drain men of their "precious bodily fluids." Only slightly less obvious is the film's sense of a reversal of real sexual power relations; men live in constant terror of female sexual aggression; a man alone is rightly terrified of riding in a subway car full of women.

Femmes Fatales also has a third thematic strand. The predatory sexuality of the women is consistently linked to urban technology. When the men are put to stud, only the nude flesh of the women they service relieves the sterile, hospital-white of the surroundings. In general, sexuality is mechanical, cold, and clinical. This extends even to the casting. The only woman with a role of any size is Brigitte Fossey; naturally warm and sympathetic, as in Truffaut's The Man Who Loved Women, her natural beauty is here varnished to humanoid perfection, and she seems synthetic and completely undesirable. Virtually all the women in the film are equally cold and flawless, the stuff of male sexual fanta-

Blier's decision to separate female beauty from nature, to treat lush green countryside as an alternative to sexuality, completely overturns the standard conception of the earth as mother or as goddess of fertility.

Placing sexuality, almost always treated as among the most natural of human impulses, in opposition to nature -particularly to eating-is certainly a bold step. Whether or not such a bizarre use of imagery might be effective in another context, it fails here, largely because Blier himself has no real respect for the effort. The giant vagina sequence, a joke that sounds a good deal funnier than it plays, completely undercuts the imagery of the balance of the film. As the giant couple begin to make love, they are pictured on a gorgeous beach so conspicuously natural it might have come from a travel poster. For a film that has taken such pains to isolate sexuality from nature, this seems a peculiarly unsatisfying ending.

The gravest problem of



Annie Girardot and Isabelle Huppert in Docteur Francois Gailland.

Femmes Fatales is obviously the scope of its ambitions. Attempting to summarize and literalize the "war of the sexes," that is, the sexual tension and sexual stereotyping in contemporary society, and, simultaneously to relate predatory sexuality to urbanization and technology, is a hopelessly grandiose project. As a result, much of the second half of the film is poorly realized, with ineffective comic timing, visual heavyhandedness, and narrative incoherence. Even at its worst, though, the film is partially sustained by the boldness and enormity of its premise, by its intermittent inventiveness, and by the crazy logic of its surreal plot progressions.

David Coursen

DOCTEUR FRANCOIS GAILLAND

The "delightful" French comedy is slowly being superseded by the French soap opera, whose main proponents are Claude Sautet and the director of this film (also known as "No Time for Breakfast"), Jean-Louis Bertucelli, who made it in 1976, based on the book Une Cri by Noëlle Loriot. The plot concerns the harried and unhappy Dr. Gailland (Annie Giradot) and her troubled relations with her co-doctors, her husband (François Perrier), her lover (Jean-Pierre Cassel), and her kids (one of whom is Isabelle Huppert), all coming to a head when she discovers she has cancer. Being French, it is more sophisticated soap opera; for example, the film concludes at the point where she is being wheeled into an operating room for some risky surgery, and the physical illness is linked to the troubles in her

family life. The film is warm and interesting but may put off those who want a more conclusive ending. Bertucelli also made *Remparts d'Argyle* in 1970.

N.O. Grace

SCENIC ROUTE

Scenic Route, Mark Rappaport's 1978 film, is fascinating, not only because of its mythic content, but also its structural style. The lives of two sisters and several men who interact with them are examined in a series of vignettes which often refer to the Classical and Romantic mythology concerning sisters. Many scenes are very static, with characters posed as if in famous paintings or still photographs (reminiscent of the surrealist Man Ray) and with very little dialogue. Several of the richly colored backgrounds are recreations of specific famous lithographs or paintings which are reproduced on the walls of the elder sister's apartment. In one such scene, the two sisters are posed, motionless, nude from the waist up, and one pinches one of the other sister's nipples. Behind them are red velvet curtains. The camera moves in slowly and after a moment the sisters put on their blouses and enter another situation. A feathered wing motif occurs throughout the film, with wings mounted on walls, pictures of wings, and a wing packed on top of the clothes in the visiting sister's suitcase, an image one might expect to find in a Luis Buñuel film.

Rappaport's witty style accentuates the artificiality and component-structure of his imagery and of film itself. Various scenes are composed when suddenly the camera is moved

back, exposing the stage sets and equipment. When one actor calls for "a change of scenery," the interior backdrop is raised to reveal an outdoor exterior behind it. This kind of contrast makes the actual outdoor scenes (in the street or a forest) seem more vivid, strange, and distant from the cerebral mood of the interiors. The competition for men and resulting conflicts between the sisters is portrayed within a framework of subtle references to the trials and tribulations of famous sisters in history and symbolically updated to include such rituals as disco dancing. Though slow moving, with meditational dialogue and many static frames, Scenic Route is undeniably a clever and engrossing study of independent women trying to solve the problems a supposedly liberated modern society has given them. Russ Island

BOULEVARD NIGHTS

Boulevard Nights was better back in the '30s and '40s when it starred limmy Cagney and Pat O'Brien and was directed by Lloyd Bacon or Roy Del Ruth or any of the other Warner Brothers directors of the time. It was also better most of the eight hundred times it's been done since then, in movies and on TV. In the old days, it was filmed on the back lot instead of in the East L.A. barrio-and the cast was not generally made up of real Latinos-but it wasn't pretentious and if it was sometimes lacking in realism or authenticity, it seldom lacked energy. And it usually knew what it was about.

The locations and the cast of Boulevard Nights may be authentic and new but the Good Brother/Bad Brother storyline hasn't changed at all, a fact the film probably couldn't hide even if it had been made with a great deal more skill than is displayed here. Writer Desmond Nakano obviously isn't the man to make an old story new and director Michael Pressman, who seems to have little feeling for the material or for filmmaking in general, isn't the man to cover up the script deficiencies. Richard Yniguez's Good Brother is as tiresome as that character usually is but Danny De La Paz adds a fairly new dimension to the Bad

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Brother—apparent mental retardation.

Sociological pretensions don't mean a thing without some emotional, dramatic, or filmic sense. Walter Hill's empty-headed but expertly made fantasy The Warriors (a "gang" film to which Nights producers Tony Bill and Bill Benenson would claim their film does not compare) is, even with its ponderous humorlessness and absurd samurai affectations, more honest than this muddled enterprise. All that "authenticity" goes nowhere when people don't know what to do with it. Pat Holmes

THE CHAMP

It isn't that I'm not sentimental (I cry at supermarket openings) but I prefer my emotions to be touched rather than flogged. Franco Zeffirelli's remake of King Vidor's 1931 film is almost brutal in its attempt to wring tears from the audience. Most directors would be happy if each of us dampened a hanky or two during their films; Zeffirelli seems to have been thinking in terms of bedsheets.

Jon Voight is the fighter who's past his prime and now makes his living exercising race horses in Florida. He gambles a lot and drinks a lot but he's a good father to his son, Ricky Schroder, who adores him and calls him "champ." Into their modest but happy existence comes the boy's mother, Faye Dunaway, who abandoned them years before to go off and become a pillar of high society. She just wants a look at the boy after all these years, about eight, but Voight is afraid she'll want more than that once she's seen the charming tyke. He's right, of course, and before long, though it seems a very long time while you're watching, he's getting in training for his comeback in the ring, hoping for a new career that will not look so shabby next to the mother's wealth.

Walter Newman's script

amounts to a series of intended tearjerking episodes, directed with a vengeance by Zeffirelli, who seems unfamiliar with such concepts as restraint or subtlety. The production is Zeffirelli Lush (though some interior sets are tacky looking), photographed in a sunny, unmemorable style by Fred Koenekamp, who has done some occasional good work (like *Patton* and *Islands in the Stream*).

Had Koenekamp been in some way unacquainted with the closeup before this, he would most certainly have learned from Zeffirelli, who seems here to be unacquainted with anything else. The color consultant appears to have been the Florida Citrus Commission.

Voight, normally a very good actor, is miscast (either that or he's so bad he seems miscast) and spends the film trying to convince us we're not seeing Jon Voight but Sylvester Stallone, a bit more sensitive than usual. Dunaway hides behind excessive mannerisms and hats with large, floppy brims-she has also put on enough weight so that she doesn't have the pale, gaunt and crazy look of Network and Laura Mars—but we still know she's there, her name is in the credits. Schroder isn't really bad himself, and he works well with Voight in addition to looking slightly like him, but he's so ruthlessly exploited by Zeffirelli that his own mother would be tired of him by the

The Champ doesn't have the feeling of calculated adherence to a current popular formula (like, to name just one, Ice Castles). Zeffirelli really seems sincere but his excesses lead to the same disappointing, even irritating, end. It's one thing having your heartstrings tugged; something else entirely to have them seized and yanked clear out of your chest. The Champ is something else entirely.

Pat Holmes

TARZANA

This half-hour film noir parody by Steve De Jarnett is a delight. The name, of course, comes from the California town which is the setting for this hardboiled tale of missing parents and troubled children. Michael C. Gwynne is Milt Lassitor, a P.I. called in ("some-

time between three a.m. and dawn") to help a stowaway detained at customs, a young girl who has come to America looking for her father. She came accompanied by an English-speaking New Guinea native who has two scars on his face: one a war wound, the other added for symmetry. It is all a scheme, however, and on the way to solving it, Lassitor meets Edie Adams, Tim Carey, and Eddie Constantine. The black-and-white photography is pertinently noirish. Also note the sub-theme of malicious shopping carts appearing as shadows in a montage, patrons in a jazz club, and Zodiaclike killers. A clue appears in the form of graffiti on Thelma's detainment-cell wall.

Greg Reese

MY LOVE HAS BEEN BURNING

The films of the Festival strikingly point up the limitations in the remark by Robin Wood in "Hawks De-Wollenized" (one of the final salvoes in his extended but always illuminating war with Alan Lovell, Peter Wollen, and Screen) that, "It will seem to most people a very curious process, whereby we can only enjoy one film if we are thinking of another one while we watch it."1 Now there are some basic errors in the structuralists' argument that it is culture alone which encodes "readable" messages into singular textual systems, and that an audience understands the messages to the extent that it is able to move within that system as one moves among the signifiers of a Lacanian Symbolic or Saussurian langue, and therefore not so much learn about the world as manifest in its own behavior its dependence on the culture which produces, and is produced by, the very parameters of human thought. But despite some bad conclusions from these bad arguments there has been a good one-we have been reminded that the meaning of film parts and wholes is only explicable (but this is entirely both Beardsleyan and, perhaps more surprisingly, Bazinian) in terms of the web of connotations belonging to them and as much relating the film in question to other films, as to life and the world. Brice Parain's remarks, which Godard uses, expresses it perfectly: "The sign forces us to see an object through its significance." Film gives us the world of signs, not signs of the world, and the significance of the sign before us is as much that it is not the other signs it might be, as it is the sign that it is.

Saussure and Levi-Strauss, and hence Wollen and Lovell, have a useful insight, though based on a false linguistics and epistemology: that we know what a part of a myth or film is through realizing what it isn't. For instance, we can see how, in Hardcore, Jake's "Let's go home" to Kristen suggests, but most emphatically is not, Ethan Edwards's identical line to Debbie at the end of The Searchers. Ethan expresses his abandonment of the motive of his quest (to avenge and to "undo" the Indian raid) and his submission to its meaning (that the pieces of life can be picked up again, that one can, in a different sense from what he meant, "put an Amen to it"). It is spoken in *Hardcore* not by the one who is like Ethan, Niki, in that she will have to turn, excluded from what she has helped preserve, into the California street scene of which she is now to be the prisoner (as Ethan is to be the prisoner of the desert). Rather the line comes here from that Ransom Stoddard-like "Pilgrim," Jake, for whom the Doniphon-like Mast takes the rap, the guilt, of shooting the Liberty Valance figure.

For Jake, there is no gap to which he might submit between the motive and meaning of the quest. Rather, he fulfills the quest and goes home, damping that primary resonance Bazin taught us to find in the Western as such, set up by the clash between the facts that the law, which represses violence, must prevail, and that men who establish it must do so by a violence which debars them from enjoying it. 3 Cahiers is wrong in a lot of ways about Young Mr. Lincoln, but they're right about Lincoln, that he is a kind of monster because he is both the Law and its agent, castrated and castrator, possessor and user of the phallusand so is Jake.

Jake the quester, the one

who uses, who becomes the enemy, who puts the kiss of Cain on Niki's brow and betrays her, goes back East to the town where the ice breaks as it broke in Young Mr. Lincoln, while Niki, the one who pops her legs on the peep-show wall like Wyatt Earp on the railing in My Darling Clementine with the same insoucient grace, pays like Ethan and like Doniphon.

If Niki is Wyatt, there is no sense of a return to a Clementine of her own after her exile, and the effect of Jake's taking Kristen back is that of a residue of guilt unabsolved, of reconciliation ungrounded, a tearing ambiguity full of nostalgia for the moral certitude by which Ethan could win by losing and make us, as Truffaut said of John Wayne in that scene, love him forever. The meaning of Hardcore, then, lies exactly in its differance (as Derrida would spell it, and for the same reasons) from the Ford films through whose significance we know it.

Now there is an aspect of Robin Wood's argument, in which he claims that "Art exists only in the flesh of the achieved work," which lets him claim guite rightly that "The value of Ford's [or anyone's] art lies in the way his emotional commitments are realized in the movement of sounds and images on the screen,"4 which we should preserve as an antidote to the extreme form of Lovell and Wollen's "ghostly paradigms," the idea that Hawks is valuable to the extent that Monkey Business is a dark shadow modeling and giving value to Hatari!; that is, that Hawks is valuable for all the films at once rather than for each of them.⁵ But still Lovell's critique of Wood's "moral realism" (which attends to the film before us primarily as if it were life itself⁶), was an accurate one to the extent that the moral realism allowed Wood to underplay the resonance of other films in the one on the screen, and certainly the kind of attitude Lovell was objecting to lives on in the kind of complaint we read of Hardcore, that it provides "insufficient development of the characters," etc. Why, those characters are developed into meditations on the highest pinnacles of film iconography and must be taken

in the context of their meaning, as the film itself makes clear by its constant mocking references to Star Wars, a triviality which was itself a pretense at replicating The Searchers and which, by copying the pattern of the greater film, violated its substance. But Hardcore, by providing (through its deferment from that film) an ambiguity The Searchers could do without, is true to the substance of Ford's similarly anguished vision, by violating its pattern and hence affirming it.

Likewise, a film works by differentiation from other films, the connotations of which it thus makes its own, as links in its own chain of interpretantseach finds its own space in that web of connotations, its meaning equalling its commentary on that web by virtue of its location. But each does it differently. The classic auteurist situation holds for Mizoguchi's My Love Has Been Burningit is the gaps among other Mizoguchi films that this one defines and fills: it is through their significance that we see the object of this sign.

I will show what I mean by enjoying "one film if we are thinking of [other ones] while we watch it," that is, try to spot the intersection of the insights of Lovell and Wood. Mizoguchi's My Love Has Been Burning is from a story by Ozu's long-time co-scriptwriter Kogo Noda, and indeed the first actress who takes our eye, Kuniko Miyake, is one of those unforgettable Ozu stock players -she is the mother in Ohayo, the pretend intended second wife in Late Spring, the sympathetic if oppressed wife of the doctor/son in Tokyo Storywith an enigmatic melancholy cheerfulness more like a feminine Chishu Ryu (and hence quintessentially bearing Ozu's quality) than the more vulnerable and neurotic Setsuko Hara. Likewise the last scene, the reconciliation on the train, is more like the last scene of Floating Weeds (the 1959 version scripted by Noda) than anything else in Mizoguchi.

But the focus on Kuniko Miyake is a false lead, and the film (indeed the shot) at once pans to settle on passionate, intelligent, impulsive Kinuyo Tanaka (a sort of Japanese Monica Vitti) playing the char-



Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh in Korda's That Hamilton Woman.

acter Eiko Hirayama. And although Tanaka is (very differently, infinitely more sedately) the wife in Ozu's Equinox Flower, she is infinitely more memorable as the potter's wife in Ugetsu, the yearning mother ("Zushio...Anju...") in Sansho Dayu, Okita in Utamaro and his Five Women, and, unforgettably, Oharu herself. No face, except perhaps Machiko Kyo's (the dream princess in *Ugetsu*, the princess Yang Kwei Fei, the whore "Mickey" who propositions her own father in Street of Shame) is more Mizoguchian than hers, or more resonant with his characters' quality of outraged but self-contained rebelliousness, an outrage without the least hint of prissiness at a world run by an insane and inhumane social system which values property and propriety while being totally heedless of normal impulsive human feeling.

Leaning over a boat on the shore and yearning out towards her servant/friend Chiyo who has been sold into slavery, Hirayama resembles the mother rushing along the beach in Sansho yearning for her children sold into slavery. (The daughter there, Anju, is played by Mitsuko Mito, who is the abducted Chiyo here, the surly, impetuous, working-class version of feminism who is a foil to Hirayama's less maladaptive firm middle-class feminism.) The tone of Hirayama's situation is familiar, a tone of reserved contempt for spineless oppressors with a temporary upper hand such as her fatuous liberal politician lover who has proved himself as traditional (seducing Chiyo himself, treating Chiyo with contempt as the kind of woman who is a mistress and expecting Hirayama to be perfectly pleased with that) in his sexual mores as the worst other Mizoguchian wretches. And Hirayama's selfcontained, ironic reserve as she waits, prim in her liberated-Japanese-woman Western Victorian dress (the film is set in the 1880s), to tell him she is leaving him, and then going without a backward glance, is among those glorious images of the transcendance of the self over society, even when society has all the power, like the selfcontainment of the lovers riding bound above the crowd, accepting their impending crucifixion with a steely contempt for everyone else, in Chikamatsu Monogatari, or Yang Kwei Fei gliding toward her death and toward that union in the spirit world.

The ending image that is most striking in My Love Has Been Burning is the penultimate one. Chiyo has, it turns out, rejected the politician in her turn, and thus like Hirayama has rejected woman's dependence on man. She emerges from the smoke of the secondclass carriage into the first-class one where Hirayama sits listening to men praise the politician lover for his liberality. Chiyo, who had set fire to the sweatshop in which she was imprisoned after being raped and deserted, has emerged from the smoke of that rebelliousness into the clear light of a feminist sisterhood (who knows how many years before its time), marks one of the great Mizoguchi cadences from frenzied effort to dignified acceptance

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of victory-in-defeat.

What we have here, then, is a blending of the two main qualities of Mizoguchi's films, which usually work against each other. Mizoguchi is always feminist, always outraged by that simple idiocy which hierarchical, traditionalist, class societies always show in every regard, but nowhere more clearly than in their blind assumption that it is simply right and proper for women to be subordinated to men. And very often his films simply document, as harrowingly as possible, the contrast between the vivid sensibilities of oppressed women, and the destructive capacity of the worlds they find themselves in: Osaka Elegy, Sisters of Gion, Women of the Night, Street of Shame have this kind of vividness, explicitly about modern women, between normal sensibilities and unresponsive authority structures.

The other strand virtually defines intensity in the cinematic framework. It leaps the bounds of the novelistic, the social, and hence the less universal (since more culture- and history-bound) into the timelessness of pure intolerable myth, where what happens becomes pure exemplification of thematic story, the surface so charged with meaning that it is no longer someone else's tale one watches but rather the necessary, the only pattern of feeling which is each person's alone, and everyone's. Ugetsu, Sansho Dayu, Yang Kwei Fei, Life of Oharu: these are films stripped of the observational, "realistic" in the sense Bazin reserved for masterpieces which wouldn't seem realistic at all to some dumb-headed canon of verisimilitude. Films like Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne, Monsieur Verdoux and Limelight, Nights of Cabiria, Voyage to Italy ("No more cinema," said Bazin at end of his essay on Bicycle Thief, like Godard at the end of Weekend), and these films of Mizoguchi's achieve that quality which Bazin called "abstraction by way of incarnation," that "hidden accord which things maintain with an invisible counterpart of which they are, so to speak, merely the adumbration.'

Of course, this second set of Mizoguchi films has a wealth of precise social observation as well, and of course nothing could be more feminist than Oharu, just as nothing could be more single-mindedly supportive of a leading idea ('the coming period of Samurai dominance will be wonderful') than Shin Heike Monogatari. But still, these "mythic" films have a concentration which makes them sing like taut wires in our heads, an inevitable progression which more resembles the syllogism than the novel. They are so pure that, if one were to criticize them, one would do it in the way that the unsympathetic cinephile does Bergman, as too literary, too cultured, lacking the humility before the world's otherness which has always, as Bazin understood, been film's chief glory, which has made the Hawks Western, the Minnelli musical, the Sirk melodrama, the Hitchcock dry fable, among its chief delights.

Now I'm not about to criticize these mythic films, but am only pointing out where their armor is weakest. A thousand flowers must be allowed to bloom (how could we stop them?), and Lang's Siegfried itself wouldn't look so bad even to Bazin now that no one is saying that it's everything which Nosferatu is not. But still, as there can be superfluity of message in social observation films like Women of the Night, so there can be superfluity of meaning in myth. Ugetsu, to take the extreme, suffers a kind of bloodlessness, a lack of social immediacy, which fits it perfectly for academic survey courses in film and which is the opposite side of the almost sentimental quality of "being observed" of Women of the Night and Street of Shame, which no professor would put in his ten instances of ultimate film art along with The Seventh Seal and The Last Laugh.

In general, then, it is the films "in the middle" which are the best, those which, while emphasizing one quality or the other, mythic intensity or observational complexity, have plenty of the other quality to offset the dominant one, to prevent sentimental overinvolvement or that intellectual detachment which can come from the patterned quality of mythic "proof." Among these best, surely, would be Chikamatsu on the mostly social side, with its precise observation of family and business life much like that of My Love Has Been Burning, yet with its overwhelming love story, and Sansho Dayu on the mostly mythic side, with its implacable unrealistic logic ("we've seen how it would be if Zushio were to have come up against the governors from below, now let's see how it would be if he went against the rules which bind the governors if he were one of them"), yet also with all the richness of precise observation which we see in the prostitute guarters of Gion.

Mizoguchi's films are all films of passion, of course, more like Zola than like Balzac, Dickens than Thackeray, Dostoyevski than Tolstoi. The torments of the slave quarters in Sansho come a little hard from my pen as examples of social observation equivalent to the oppressive clutter and narrow passages in the streets devoted to casual sexual commerce in Sisters of Gion, or the tawdry dark or sleazy modernistic apartments in Osaka Elegy. But that just shows how, everywhere you push, Mizoguchi's passionate sympathy, that main quality by which we recognize his films, stands out; there is for him no neutral social fact but every fact becomes exemplary of its meaning, indicative of the conflict between humans and their oppressive contexts. The sweatshop in My Love Has Been Burning is another version of the hell created by the bailiff Sansho, as is the lurid rubble where the whores live in Women of the Night. Granted the tendency to the mythic and the intense, however, the very best films balance it with a cool observational sharing of the hero's or heroine's point of view, so that the final transcendence through acceptance is plausible.

And it is here that My

Love Has Been Burning comes through. It is mythic in its intense, Oharu-like sympathy for the woman who only expects men to be what they say they are and to play fair, but who finds that her first love betrays his own cause (and her) for security, and that her politician lover does not extend his public ideals into his private life. But the film is not only mythic. It is also social and detailed in its Chrysanthemum-like, Utamarolike illumination of a whole world of activity, of politics and social agitation in an unfamiliar period about which we make novelistic discoveries. It is the quality of this film itself to have a stripped-down, functional concentration on its own point which makes the outline and message of the story emerge from what, in that perspective, seems merely the frosting of verisimilitude, and at the same time to have an elaborated, informative, observational character which makes the richness of social life accessible beyond what, in this other perspective, seem like the mere requirement of plot in a film Bazinianly reverent of reality.

We have not, I think, become mere "moral realists" to detect this tense, but even, dialectic in the film, for we are seeing the meaning of Hirayama's story, as much through the signs which render it, with all their capacity to form units with other signs and to establish genre, as we are seeing it as if it were life itself. It is, certainly, "in the flesh of the achieved work" that the "emotional commitments are realized," not in either the other films we have referred to or in the implications of Hirayama's as-if-real life. We have stayed with the film itself, as film not as life or message.

But on the other hand, what that "film itself" is has patently included interactions with other films (or facts) "outside" its own web of sounds and images, its primary signifiers. Yet this is (or should be) no more of a surprise to a New Critic like Wood (or like myself) than to structuralists like Lovell and Wollen or poststructuralists like Barthes, Althusser, and Derrida. For Beardsley, with his insistence that connotations are as much a part of something as its more immediate meaning, as for Barthes, with his demonstration that the sign has a level of analysis on which the primary meaning-bearing sign (the denotation) is itself a signifier of which the signified is exactly connotation, what must be said about a perceptual meaning-bearing object, whether we think of the born meaning as emergent quality as Beardsley does or as coded message as communications-minded semiologists do, is very much part of it.

Its connotations are part of the film; connotations are what bear on something and are necessary to its comprehension yet which are not part of its immediate signification; the other Mizoguchi films are just such "connotations" in this sense; the other Mizoguchi films are part of this one, QED. It is not that we are "thinking of another one while we watch" the film before us, but that the film we are watching contains, rearranges, rewrites those others. My Love Has Been Burning partakes of the network of possibilities from which we cannot separate it, which define it and form the connotations which, taken as signifiers, signify the Piercian "interpretants" in terms of which alone we can comprehend or describe it, and which give it its meaning through location in the Mizoguchi canon: a bit to the right of Street of Shame towards Oharu (using a sort of Godardian license to label leftwards the more social and rightwards the more universal), but left of Sansho, Yang Kwei Fei, and certainly Ugetsu. A good place to be, and a place which would not exist as a conceptual space without the coordinates of the other Mizoguchi films which hold it there in suspension.

William Cadbury

1In Personal Views (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976), pp. 191-206, p. 205. It is probably worth listing the other engagements in that interesting campaign: Alan Lovell, "Robin Wood: A Dissenting View," Screen, X (1969), 42-55; Robin Wood, "Ghostly Paradigm and H.C.F.: An Answer to Alan Lovell," Screen, X (1969), 35-48; Alan Lovell, "The Common Pursuit of True Judgment,"

Screen, XI (1970), 76-88; and then, defending Wood, John C. Murray, "Robin Wood and the Structural Critics," Screen, XII (1971), 101-110. The terrain has altered somewhat, but an important recent broadside by a colleague of Wood's probably should be seen as a continuation of the same hostilities: Andrew Britton, "The Ideology of Screen," Movie, No. 26 (Winter, 1978-9), 2-28.

²Jean-Luc Godard, "Towards a Political Cinema," in Godard on Godard (New York: Viking, 1968), p. 16. James Monaco makes much of this quote in his *The New Wave* (New York: Oxford, 1976), Chapter 7.

³Andre Bazin, "The Western: Or the American Film Par Excellence," What is Cinema? Volume II (Berkeley: California, 1971), pp. 140-48.

⁴Wood, "Ghostly Paradigm," pp. 41 and 47.

5Peter Wollen's argument about Hawks in Signs and Meaning in the Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana, 1969), esp. pp. 90-94, is, of course, the special target of Wood's "Hawks De-Wollenized."

⁶Lovell, "Common Pursuit," pp. 81 and 85.

⁷Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, II, pp. 60, 138 and 88.

VIOLETTE

Claude Chabrol views Violette Noziere in this 1978 film with a fascinated but uncomprehending passion. He dissects her life, breaks her movements down to basics (shoes in hand, feet downstairs, a quiet look of wariness, shoes put on at the street, strapped later) as if roving for access to this mysterious, impregnable woman. It is the culmination to date of his love/ hate obsession with bourgeoise society and family life. Let it be said immediately that it is a brilliant film, sure in its cutting, confident in its methodical pacing, rich in the abundance of gestures used to explicate Violette. Chabrol's film offers the interesting possibility of comparison with Resnais's Stavisky in terms of tone, attitude, style, and political perspective, as well as with films of the thirties. Our era is so frenetic that our filmmakers seem to feel the need to slow down their films in order to



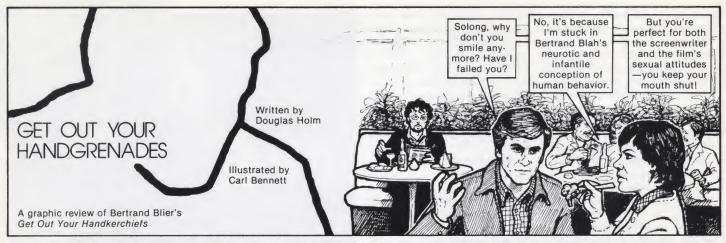
Isabelle Huppert in Chabrol's Violette.

capture moods, reflections, or actions that pass by quickly otherwise in life. The cinema as drug has become Qualuude, as opposed to the Dexedrine of the thirties, the booze of the forties, the Valium of the fifties, and the LSD of the sixties. We emerge from our fidgety discomfort into the swift, unhesitating real world, more often than not unsatisfied, for, incredibly enough, we want no antidote to reality, but rather an intensification of it.

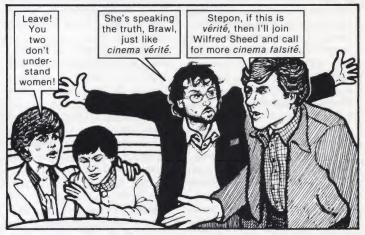
Among the many interesting aspects to this film is the decision to show the actual murder itself as a series of flashbacks. Why did Chabrol choose to do it this way? It seems to me that once the crime is committed, the principal emphasis is on its effect on Violette herself, and the ironic rise of her humanity, the guilt, the sudden memories of her childhood. Before this we see a selfish, bored Violette whose mysterious needs cannot be satiated. The steps that lead her to murder are carefully and fully laid out, without necessarily explaining Violette (that is, explaining her away). It seems as if once she commits the outrageous crime, Chabrol's sympathy overcomes his distance from the subject and she thereupon is flooded with (futile) emotions and memories.

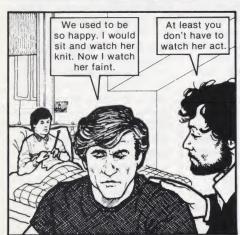
The acting is, of course, exquisite. Isabelle Huppert would seem to American audiences to be perpetually typecast in roles that call on her more zombie-like possibilities. Her career is more varied, although the role of a young repressed girl is an antidote to her typecasting in France as the fresh, knowing daughter/sister, in such films as Les Valseuses (1973), Serieux comme le Plaisir (1974), Je Suis Pierre Riviere (1975), and Les Indiens sont encore loin (1976). Her performance in Violette requires her to express a variety of emotions without ever using her face. Much of the effects are achieved through editing and juxtaposition, to be sure, but many times, as for example when she kisses the mirror, or is caught stealing money from her father, or when she puts her leg up on a young man's table, her physical movements are in perfect control, expressing both a sultry boredom and a desperate unemotionalism. It is a fascinating, multi-faceted creation. The film, however, is so perfectly balanced that Huppert's acting does not override dramatically the other performers. There is never the feeling that this is an actor's vehicle, as we do with other, stranger film personalities.

Greg Reese

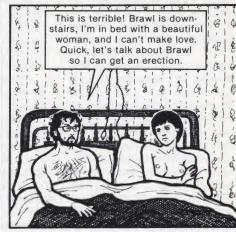








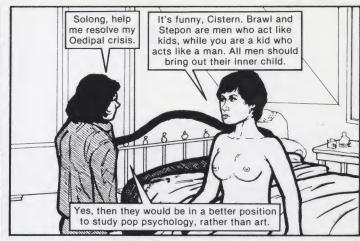














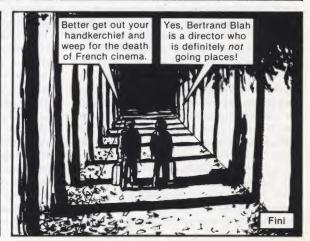














The Political and Religious Meaning of Antonioni's

THE PASSENGER

By Theodore Price

This article is the text of a paper given at Purdue University's Film Conference last March, where it electrified an audience of film scholars with its explication of the Antonioni film's meaning. The Passenger, in 16mm, is available from Films, Inc.

This paper is the framework for a monograph I'm writing on *The Passenger*. Although my current work is mainly concentrated on detailed book-length studies of the films of Fellini and of Hitchcock, I find Antonioni's latest film remarkably enjoyable to watch and comment upon.

The film has, for the most part, assumed an important place in Antonioni's oeuvre. Yet I find that just about all contemporary reviewers of the film, certainly the American ones, from first to last, seem not to know quite what the film is about, and certainly not what it is about politically; or, if they do know, they are keeping it to themselves. They either like or dislike the film for all the wrong reasons or, at least, for reasons irrelevant to the film's political and artistic thrust. They give their readers the impression that the film is enigmatic, and difficult to explicate; and so they

explicate it very little. I, on the contrary, find the film eminently clear and easy to explicate, and not just in an erudite way for other film specialists, but in a matter-of-fact, unsophisticated way for the intelligent layman.

Many reviewers, not really having understood what Antonioni was about, make some chancy, witty, or cruel remarks about the film, and, far from placing the film politically and artistically, are, in fact, bluffing. Or such is my feeling. I have, therefore, developed a very specific five-point litmus test to alert the reader to whether or not they are bluffing.

But first, especially for those who may not have seen *The Passenger*, let me just give a synopsis of the story the way most reviewers give it, reviews intended to help their readers get a fix on what the film is about. The hero is the Jack Nicholson character David Locke, a man in his early thirties, who is a successful, respected, and rather famous maker of television documentaries for the British public television network. He specializes in political documentaries. He's not happy at home: his wife argues with him about his work, and she has a lover.

When the film starts, Nicholson is in

some African country finishing up a documentary on political events and trying to get an interview with a guerrilla leader of the country. He fails to do so, which sparks off what is evidently a long-smouldering feeling that he is dreadfully unhappy with his life and work. When a stranger in his hotel, who resembles him physically, dies of a heart attack, Nicholson swaps "bodies" and passports with him and flies back to Europe so that now everyone thinks that it is Nicholson who has died. The stranger had an appointment book with meeting dates in Munich, Barcelona, and Algeciras; Nicholson decides to keep the appointments. We learn that the stranger had in fact been selling guns to the guerrillas of that African country, and the contacts now simply believe that Nicholson is that man.

In flashbacks in London, where Nicholson's colleagues are planning to make a television documentary of his life, we see Nicholson interviewing the black dictator of the country, we see the execution of a guerrilla leader that Nicholson had got on tape, and we see an interview with a former witch-doctor of the country. The dictator's secret police now get on the trail of Nicholson in his new identity, and Nicholson's wife and colleague also try to locate him in

order to learn more of the "real" Nicholson's "death."

Meanwhile, Nicholson meets a semibeatnik type young girl who is touring Europe studying architecture, especially the buildings of the Spanish architect Gaudí, in whose buildings the two meet and talk. She tells Nicholson that Gaudí died after being hit by a bus. Nicholson looks at Gaudí's unusual buildings and asks if he was crazy. The girl goes off with him, they sleep together, and she urges him to keep the gunrunner's appointments.

The wife, meanwhile, discovers that Nicholson has changed identities and is, in fact, alive. She tries to locate and warn him that he is being hunted by the dictator's secret police. In fact, it is her actions that help lead the secret police to him. The film ends in a hotel in Algeciras, where we do not see just what happens, but we can assume that the secret police kill Nicholson. When the wife sees his body, she says she does not know him; the girl says she does.

Now, if that's all you know about the story of the film (and remember, old Aristotle was fond of saying that the "story" of a drama was by far its most important element), it's no wonder you might not be sure of the thrust of the film and find the film enigmatic (or worse, just a fancy version of an old-fashioned Hollywood chase film, as some reviewers describe it). Well, here is my five-point litmus test to determine whether a critic of the film is bluffing or not:

- 1. He is bluffing if he doesn't tell you a little about the Spanish architect Gaudí, whose works are so prominent in the film, and whose philosophy of Art and Life, and whose life and death relate so significantly to the theme of the film.
- 2. He is bluffing if he doesn't discuss the political events of the real-life African country where Nicholson is shooting his documentary, and show how these events relate so centrally to the story of Antonioni's film. (The country is Chad, where political events have suddenly heated up again as I write.)
- 3. He is bluffing if he doesn't discuss Chung Kuo/China, the television documentary that Antonioni made in Red China just before he made The Passenger, and which gave rise to such bitter personal feelings between him and the Chinese leaders. (You would think, would you not, that if a director had just made a film about the maker of a television documentary about a revolutionary country, and that this director had himself just made a television documentary about a revolutionary country, one could postulate some connection?)
- 4. He is bluffing if he doesn't discuss The Passenger in relation to some very common-knowledge Leninist revolutionary theory, which relates deadcenter to Nicholson's artistic malaise in the film and to the general malaise of many real-life liberal reporters of current revolutionary events.
- Finally (by far the best test of all), he is bluffing if he doesn't tell you why the film is called "The Passenger," or if he



Jack Nicholson with Maria Schneider in The Passenger.

doesn't know, tells you he doesn't know. (Poor Penelope Gilliatt doesn't bluff but thinks that the "passenger" of the film is not Nicholson but the girl, Maria Schneider, because she's riding in the passenger seat of Nicholson's car.)

Before I go on to try and show you that I am not bluffing, let me just place for you quickly the artistic design of the film. This design too is quite simple. It's similar to that of Fellini's 81/2. There we have the spiritual and artistic tribulations of its herodirector Guido, who throughout the film can't seem to make the film he is working on. Finally, though, he resolves his spiritual and artistic impasse and successfully does make the film, and the film he makes is the film that we have just seen: 81/2. Antonioni's The Passenger is the genuine film documentary of the Jack Nicholson character's life, in contrast to the essentially false documentary that his friends and colleagues are planning to make.

Let's now take our five points, but working backwards, and show how just a little information about each of them helps explain what Antonioni's film is about. First, why is it called *The Passenger?*

Well, in common parlance, a passenger is someone not in the driver's seat, not in control of the vehicle, passive, someone along for the ride, often for pay. This rather vague meaning is what some reviewers (very few) call attention to. It is not incorrect, but it is not really the precise reason for the film's title, as I shall go on to show.

The word has two other meanings never really mentioned in any review, but impeccably relevant: (1) a "passenger" has a long history of meaning a passerby, a wayfarer, one who is on a journey, going from place to place, stopping here and there, but not for long and; (2) every human being is a passenger on the journey from life to death. Since there are three important

deaths in the film (that of the gunrunner, David Robertson; that of the executed revolutionary leader; and, at the end of the film, in the famous long-take, that of the hero, Jack Nicholson), there is no question that the title functions on this level, too, and functions well. I'll discuss this aspect more when I discuss our "fourth" death, the real-life one of the architect Gaudí.

But the true meaning of the title, and the one that helps alert us to the political thrust of the film, is more specific. If Antonioni had made a film entitled The Texas Leaguer and it was nothing about Texas or some league, a conscientious reviewer would easily explain it, or wonder about it and say he didn't understand. A Texas Leaguer is, of course, simply common baseball slang for a short fly ball that is hit too far out of the infield for an infielder to back up fast enough to catch, and too far in from the outfield for an outfielder to race in to catch. It falls safely for a hit, usually an extra-base one. The term lends itself to interesting metaphorical use; if a non-baseball film were indeed to be so titled, the first thing we'd try to do would be to see how that image functioned as a metaphor to help place the meaning of the film for us.

"Passenger" is simply a term of British boating slang, "one of a crew who cannot pull his own weight," or "a member of a racing crew whose weight retards the boat more than his power adds to its speed." (It's also used by South African farmers to designate an animal in a herd that "contributes little or nothing to the functioning or productivity of the group.")

The film's original title was *Profession:* Reporter (that's still how it is known on the Continent). The two Davids of the film, David Robertson and David Locke, are "doubles." Robertson's profession is Revolutionist. Nicholson is a liberal, bourgeois



Jack Nicholson with plane ticket and false mustache in Antonioni's The Passenger.

reporter whose sympathies, like those of so many liberal, bourgeois reporters (or filmmakers or film critics or film teachers) lie solidly with the guerrilla revolutionists, but who just observe, write, talk, or make "objective" documentaries. Robertson is a revolutionist who is engagé, who participates, who acts, who is prepared to fight. (Nicholson carries a Uher tape recorder; Robertson carries a Walther automatic.)

From its political aspect, Antonioni's The Passenger is a political fable, a brief for Lenin's key pronouncement that anyone for the Revolution must act and not just talk.

At the 1903 constitutional convention of what eventually ended up the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), there was a split among the delegates as to who should be allowed to be members of the Party. One group, led by Martov, wanted to let in anyone who sympathized with the goals of the Party; the other group, led by Lenin, wanted to let in only those who submitted to Party discipline and who would act when the Party ordered them to. After some questionable maneuvering, Lenin's group won a very small majority. That's how Lenin's group got its name, the Bolsheviks, which, in Russian, means "the majority."

Lobbying for his point of view, Lenin made his famous statement:

The root of the mistakes made by those who are supporting Martov's formula lies in the fact that they not only ignore one of the main evils of our party life, but actually sanctify it. That evil lies in the fact that in an atmosphere of almost universal political discontent, in conditions where most of our activity is concentrated in narrow underground circles it is to the last degree difficult, almost impossible, for us to distinguish the talkers from the workers. We suffer from this evil cruelly, not only among the intelligentsia, but also in the ranks of the working class, and Comrade Martov's

formula legitimizes it.

From this time, the terms "hards" and "softs" came into vogue in Party circles. Antonioni's The Passenger is a brief for the "hards."

The year before he made The Passenger Antonioni made a documentary on China for Italy's television network, RAI, in which, I gather, he uses his camera as an observer, with a point of view, but subtly, and not very propagandistically (as in his interesting, early documentary short, "The Garbage Collectors" [Nettezza Urbana]). All hell broke loose among the Chinese, who had expected him to make a propagandist PR film about the Chinese New Man.

What they seem to have resented most was Antonioni's claim to objectivity or what they thought was his claim. They called him a charlatan and a clown and tried to keep his film from being shown in Sweden, France and Greece.

Antonioni was terribly bitter about the accusations, almost unable to talk about them in an interview: "I have been accused of being a fascist! Of having fought with the fascist troops! I want the Chinese to know this: during the war, as a member of the Resistance, I was condemned to death. I was on the other side! I must say these things, once and for all, because it can't go on that these people go around insulting me in this way."

Interviewed at the time of The Passenger about "objectivity" in reporting and filmmaking, he kept declaring against the "myth of objectivity" and maintaining that "pretending to be objective you annul yourself....What sense would life have, then?"

He says that the Nicholson character, as a journalist, sees reality from his own viewpoint, which to him seems objective; but in the film he, Antonioni, as the director, plays the role of "the journalist behind

the journalist." He adds other dimensions to what Nicholson considers reality. In short, one could perhaps consider The Passenger as the Chinese argument against Antonioni's China documentary.

Without having seen the documentary or having available the Chinese arguments against the film, I cannot presume to pass judgment on the matter, although it is not unheard of for a bourgeois, left-wing artistsympathizer to get kicked on one side of his behind by some Communist functionary and then shortly to turn the other cheek. At any rate, this whole l'affaire Chung Kuo casts important light on The Passenger and cannot be ignored.

The events in *The Passenger* take place in 1973 (the film came out in '75). Chad is a former French protectorate given its independence in 1960. It is just south of Libya, about the size of France, Spain, and Italy combined, with between four and five million people. About half the population is Muslim, living mostly in the north; about 5 percent of the southern Blacks are Christian; the rest are of native, "primitive" African religion.

The Chad president, Tombalbaye, presumably the dictator in the film, soon set up a one-party dictatorship. A typically Communist National Liberation Front, called Frolinat, mostly Muslim Arabs of Northern Chad, backed by Libya and Egypt's Nasser, began guerrilla operations against Tombalbaye. He proceeded to call in French troops to fight the guerrillas, the French, under De Gaulle, wanting to maintain French influence in Africa, and feeling, in line with the domino theory, that if Chad fell to the National Liberation Front, so would the rest of Africa. At first there were just advisors, then helicopter units, finally a small army of French Foreign Legionnaires.

It all becomes very, very involved. Although the French never really relieved Tombalbaye of the Frolinat danger, he shortly threw out the French troops, changed all French names to native African, and began torturing and killing Black Christian missionaries. In 1975 Tombalbaye was himself killed in an Army coup; and now, in March, 1979, it looks as though the National Liberation Front Communists have control of the country.

The point is that in the early 1970s Chad was, for France, another Vietnam, like the original North Vietnam before Dienbienphu, and Algeria later, the situation portrayed by Gillo Pontecorvo in his film, Battle of Algiers, Liberal French journalists were calling for the return of French troops, and during 1973 (the year of the story of *The Passenger*) a Chad political opponent of Tombalbaye was assassinated in Paris, causing a scandal.

All this is background to what simpleminded reviewers of The Passenger refer to in their story summary as Nicholson's attempt to interview some guerrillas in a new African country.

The film is not objective in its attitude

to these events. The "good guys" in the film are the German and Black rebels who meet Nicholson in Munich and, thinking he is Robertson, pay him for the guns and thank him for his personal involvement in helping them. The "bad guys" in the film are the President dictator and his Black and White Teddy-Boy thugs. The good guys include Robertson, who is described in the screenplay (by Antonioni, Mark Peploe, and Peter Wollen) as having deserted from the British Army in Kenya, and the executed rebel leader, whose execution constitutes such a powerful sequence in the film. (Incidentally, the "witch-doctor" sequence in the film, which puzzles some viewers, is simply understood once we know that the "witch-doctor" and the executed rebel leader are one and the same. The screenplay makes this quite explicit. Nicholson's questions are meant to be both stupid and funny-"Isn't it unusual for someone like you to have spent several years in France and Yugoslavia?"-they're the kind of questions that dumb American reporters used to ask Ho Chi Minh when he was a guerrilla chief.)

The film was originally an hour longer than it is. Antonioni had to cut it because the producers and distributors wanted a two-hour film. The published American screenplay (it is not the derived screenplay) has some dialogue that makes absolutely clear what we can only surmise from the truncated film. The key sequence here comes in the roundtable television discussion of Nicholson's life, work, and spiritual discontent by his colleagues. The "bad guy" here is Martin Knight, the producer-friend of the film. The "good guy" is a colleague named Harcourt.

Knight says that the Nicholson character had a "kind of detachment," a "talent for observation. He was always looking, always noticing." He had a "fairness." This went with his "objectivity," with his "control on life. He was always controlled," (controlled in the sense of unimpassioned).

These sound like good traits, do they not? Not so. That's to miss the point of the film. It is the meaning and brief of the film that these qualities in a reporter and in a man are bad qualities. Harcourt, Antonioni's spokesman, goes on to say, in rebuttal to Knight: "Though sometimes I think he [Nicholson] regretted it. Once in Beirut he told me he felt angry with himself, with his habit of observation. He said he thought that objectivity in a reporter was often just a style, a system of conventions. The public recognizes it, but it might have very little to do with the truth."

The announcer then adds that there was certainly a "change" in Nicholson's recent work. He seemed "more personally involved." To which Harcourt, spotlighting for us Nicholson's problem and the desperation that leads to his dropping out at the start of the film, adds: "I think he wanted to be involved but didn't know how."

With the help of the girl (she functions

as sort of a guardian angel to Nicholson), he discovers how. If you don't like the way the world is, if you find it so terrible, so horrifying, then stop just filming revolutions—start making them. Or, at the very least, get rid of this myth of filming "objectively," showing both sides. Make a film, like Eisenstein's *October*, that opts for the Revolution and portrays the villains as the monsters you feel they are.

It seems to me that all this is quite clear from the film as we have it, even without the screenplay dialogue, even if you don't know about Chad, even if you don't know about Chung Kuo and its aftermath. All one really needs to know is Lenin's theory of the "hards" and the "softs," of Professional Revolutionists versus dilettante bourgeois sympathizers; this is both common knowledge and a crucial part of 19th and 20th century cultural history.

Finally, Gaudí. And here we must shift gears a bit; for we leave the purely political realm and enter, say, a more existential realm, or, more precisely, the religious realm of Antonioni's film: the question of the meaning of life. (That's how Tolstoy liked to define religion, and I love him for it: the question of the meaning of life.) I had never heard of Antonio Gaudí before Antonioni's film and have only had time to do a little homework on him. He was a marvelously interesting Spanish, or, rather, Catalonian architect, a master builder, who, reversing Ibsen's Solness, began by designing buildings for the rich bourgeoisie and ended by designing churches for God. His early career, says one biographer, "was in marked contrast to his later anchorite existence. The sheer lavishness of his great town houses underscores the Franciscan simplicity of those last years when, hat in hand, he went about as a mendicant seeking alms for the works of the Expiatory Temple." As he found himself in the service of churches and religious orders, he set about systematically to learn about God and the meaning of life. He was born in 1852 and died in 1926. For the last twenty years of his life he lived in the Park Guell (we see the Palacio Guell in the film), walking every day to his work at the Sagrada Familia church and to the church where he prayed.

It was while walking to church that he was one day hit by a tram, and his death is as famous to Catalonians as his architecture. No one recognized him. He was just an anonymous old man who carried a Gospel book in his pocket and who was dying, just another "passenger" on his way to glory.

Cab drivers refused to pick him up, thinking he was a beggar. He was finally taken to the hospital of the Holy Cross, where he had once said he would like to die. There he lay "in a tiny room with an iron bed, a night table and chair, with space for nothing more, a pious painting at his head for the three remaining days of his life."

He had once told Albert Schweitzer of his "mystical theory about the proportions prevailing in the lines formed by the archi-

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tecture" of the kind of church he wished to build, "to reveal everywhere symbols of the divine tri-unity. This cannot be expressed in either French, German, or English, so I explain it to you in Catalonian, and you will comprehend it, although you do not know the language."

His funeral cortege was nearly a half-mile long. The story is told by an eyewitness that some of the mourners were not sure who the dead man was, but they thought he was a bullfighter. Nicholson's death in the film takes place in a hotel (the Hotel de la Gloria) near a bullring, where we hear the shouts of the crowd (earlier in the film Nicholson is shown in a Rococo German church, with the Stations of the Cross prominently displayed behind him).

Antonioni said that he did not show Nicholson's death because in any case "he was already dead." That is, the Reporter Nicholson. We are to assume that had Nicholson, instead of Robertson, died of a heart attack in that Chad hotel at the start of the film, his life would have had no meaning. And if the "gunrunner" Robertson had been killed by the assassin's bullets in that Glory Hotel at the end of the film, his life would have had a meaning. Like Gaudí, to give your life meaning you have to involve yourself, immerse yourself utterly in what you believe in, and not just be an observer.

When Nicholson asks the girl if she thought Gaudí was crazy, she replies, "What do you think?" And he answers, "No, he wasn't."

SEMIOLOGY, HUMAN NATURE, AND JOHN FORD:

THE CONTRIBUTION OF DEPTH PSYCHOLOGICAL AND OTHER THEORETICAL RESONANCES TO FILM MEANING

By William Cadbury

Chief among the drawbacks in the basic arguments of the semiological enterprise is that extremely far-reaching conclusions are made on the basis of a structural linguistics which (in certain of its aspects) formed the foundation for modern linguistics, but which is no longer taken seriously by linguists themselves as a proposal about the nature of language or, by extension, of human nature. Many of the conclusions derive from what Troubetzkoy, Jakobson, and others argued about the very limited set of features which underlie the phonological organizations of all languages. Phonology presents a picture of a "complex pattern of paired functional differences." And this is the picture of language, la langue, as Saussure understood it, "a form and not a substance," where "there are only differences without positive terms" (p. 28), which differences go to make up a "storehouse" of items possessing syntagmatic solidarity and a paradigmatic dimension permitting substitution in the speech chain.2 The structure of this storehouse is the model for all structure, and it is based on the primary operation of the human mind: "the discernment of binary opposition is a child's 'first logical operation,' and in that operation we see the primary and distinctive intervention of culture into nature. There are thus grounds for recognizing, in the capacity for the creation and perception of binary or paired 'opposites,' and in the cognate activity of the creation and perception of phonemic patterning at large, a fundamental and characteristic operation of the human mind" (p. 24). This is then "what Levi-Strauss has termed the 'socio-logic' of the human mind, which structures nature in its own image, and thus establishes the foundation for the system of totemic 'transformations' that overtly or covertly underpin our picture of the world" (p. 88).

The first thing to notice about this picture of human nature is that it is based on what is taken to be evocative about the relations among features underlying phonology, yet as Chomsky points out,

several reservations are necessary when structural linguistics is used as a model in [Levi-Strauss's] way. For one thing, the structure of a phonological system is of very little interest as a formal object: there is nothing of significance to be said, from a formal point of view, about a set of fortyodd elements cross-classified in terms of eight or ten features. The significance of structuralist phonology . . . lies not in the formal properties of phonemic systems but in the fact that a fairly small number of features that can be specified in absolute, language-independent terms appear to provide the basis for the organization of all phonological systems. The achievement of structuralist phonology was to show that the phonological rules of a great variety of languages apply to classes of elements that can be simply characterized in terms of these features; that historical change affects these classes in a uniform way; and that the organization of features plays a basic role in the use and acquisition of language. This was a discovery of the greatest importance, and it provides the groundwork for much of contemporary linguistics. But if we abstract away from the specific universal set of features and the rule systems in which they function, little of any significance remains.3

Even if there were interest in the pattern, it couldn't be said to explain language in any interesting sense. A phonology-like system describes relations among items like sounds and words, but in no sense explains either the fact that languages assign meaning to strings of sounds by means of grammars which both link sounds and meanings and discriminate between well-formed and ill-formed (or "ungrammatical") strings, or the mechanism of acquisition of these grammars by virtually all human beings, at tender ages, on the basis of limited, fragmentary and often contradictory, exposures to data. The relations among phonological features are taken as a privileged model for structuralist tenets about language acquisition, perception, knowledge, and human nature itself-yet they explain nothing very important even about language.

Now Saussure himself claimed less than his followers. For Saussure, langage (all there is to language as it is known and used) has two parts: language proper (la langue) and people speaking it (la parole). And he set the boundary of language, of la langue, to include only the level of the word or formalized phrase. Language for him does not include sentences, and he took it as perfectly natural that we should be able to construct sentences (that is, engage in la parole) by stringing the arbitrarily symbolic words of language together in the natural way (whatever that would be). For him, then, consciousness would have something besides language in it-it would have in it whatever it is that could use language in its own way and construct meaningful discourse. But for structuralists who follow him, consciousness has only language in it, difficult as it is to believe.

In Lacan's perverse version of Freud, for instance, what inaugurates and hence explains the child's passing beyond the stade du miroir, the "mirror stage," of Imaginary identifications, and enables him or her to start to participate in a world of Symbolic forms, is the perception of sexual difference (castration, the entertainability of the idea of absence of the phallus) internalized by means of the practice game of "Fort! Da!," a game establishing a difference between presence and absence on which the rest of acculturated perception can be built, starting with the perception of phonemic difference. We see the world into the shape our minds let us, starting from that point, and our minds simply let us see the methods of structuralist linguistics, establishing a network of differences like that

which characterizes la langue.4

It follows that, as Heidigger said, "Language speaks, not man" (p. 159), which is to say that our culture speaks through us the way it wants to. One can see how Marxist it is, too, how understandable it is that just as Lacan undermines Freud's generative insights by conflating them with Saussure's descriptivism, so Althusser, for instance, undermines (as Michael Harrington, for one, would argue) Marx's generative insights about human freedom within ideological necessity by absorbing them into a Saussurian mechanism which is simply not (as Andrew Britton has recently shown) commensurate with the claim for a "science" which is able to make the epistemological leap beyond ideology.5 So it is Marxist if not like Marx: social being determines consciousness; the very structure of social being, of the Other, is the structure of language; language determines con-

For Lacan and Althusser, consciousness has only language in it. In fact, there is no consciousness, at least no Cartesian "Subject," but only the Other. So while it is not clear who we are as we do it, it is clear that within "the prison-house of language" we move around among the cells as (in some sense) we choose, never able to see the world outside but mechanically bound not to pre-established ideas but rather to the very process of demarcating differences, of assuaging desire by establishing pleasure at the rim, achieving at the best the rapture of unintelligibility, *jouissance* in the Other. And this is exactly Lacan's (though neither Freud's nor Saussure's) picture of human maturity, to give up the Imaginary illusion of access to reality and to exercise the Symbolic achievement, of seeing and putting things in chains of other terms like Piercian "interpretants," to live with and within that Other, to act always like structuralist linguists—as has been said, to be human is to be a structuralist.

It begins to appear, though, that, unlike Saussure, Althusser and Lacan are urging something about consciousness as well as describing it-they are urging that we be more true to ourselves than we might otherwise be, that we be more in "Science" and "The Symbolic" and less in "Ideology" and "The Imaginary," more in that reality which is difference and less in that illusion which is "presence." We seem to be free to choose to be like structuralists as well as being imprisoned in structuralism. There's an imperative here: Levi-Strauss says "be a structuralist and a good scientist"; Lacan says "grow into the Symbolic"; Althusser says "break with Ideology." If one is true to one's nature one can do better work, as Levi-Strauss makes plain in the "overture" to The Raw and the Cooked, that if he does his analysis of myth by that method he will thereby be in tune with, and accurate to the myths of, the minds he is studying, savage and his (and our) own.

Likewise for Althusser, for each of us it is the "method" of "science," of the operation of criticism and self-criticism, by which the a-historical "ideology," always encouraging us by its Ideological State Apparatuses to believe in "the Subject" so that our relations to the relations of production will be reproduced and those relations of production perpetuated, can be transcended, the "epistemological break" assured, so we can live as "concrete individuals" in the actual reality of history, recognizing that we are bound if we see ourselves as "Subjects," or believe in the reality we think we see, and free only if we insist on attention to the process of what is outside ourselves, to the Infrastructure and the realities of class struggle.6

II

Now it follows from this picture of human nature—deluded by the "illusion of presence" and in tune with reality only if able to detect "structuring absences" through the operation of difference, "deferment"that an objectivist view of art objects like books or films is going to be contaminated by ideology, and that a structuralist view of human nature is going to entail a structuralist criticism. As to books and films, in fact, Roland Barthes's S/Z (universally taken as the model of structuralist method) applies this world-view to the concept of criticism, and shows "first that the text...does not offer an accurate picture of an unchangingly 'real' world, and second, that a reading of it is possible which can tear away that veil, reveal the signifier-signified connection as the un-innocent convention (however politically bolstered) that it is, and offer a sense that reality remains genuinely ours to make and to remake as we please" (pp. 120-121). Thus Barthes rejects "'dishonest' criticism, based on the supposition that the work criticized exists in some objective concrete way before the critical act" (p. 155). The Symbolic critical act, not the "dishonest" Imaginary one, will be faithful to the mind which performs it, and hence will be an act of making the world over into an image of the structure of language, into an image (that is) of structuralist method, since the prison-house is one of process, not of product, and since that process, that method of differance, "deferment," is the exact and only equivalent of human nature.

If there is no reality except that which we "make and remake as we please," - and we have seen that that is exactly what structuralism holds-then it is crucial to structuralist criticism that there is no work itself, in the sense of the New Criticism, the closest thing to it being the "process of becoming a text" which Cahiers established as the outcome of its Barthesian critical method. Hence the sense, on the one hand, that one is freed from the stultifications of a spurious objectivism if one stops looking directly for meaning, as we see when John Hess argues that structuralist, semiological, and Marxist criticism avoid the formalist errors of auteurism by primary attention not to films but to conditions of their production: "the examination of a film's social context becomes more important than the film itself," and so it should if "the film itself" is an illusion and that context defines and equals the human nature which perceives it.8

But on the other hand, we can't help noting that this drawing attention away from the films we thought we wanted to study feels at least as much like a defeat as a victory. Andrew Sarris remarks correctly that Hess's attitude, far from the new departure he thinks it, is simply the bad old days come again, days before the New Criticism, when somehow "the work itself" was always, we were told, less important than some aspect of its context, though the aspect was more likely to be history or biography than the class struggle.9

It should make rather a lot of difference, then, in deciding about the problem here, that in fact the whole structuralist argument is false at the very root. Even if Metz and others urge that a "second semiology" based on Lacan, not Saussure, has managed the "break" from Saussurian empiricism to post-structuralist materialism, it is clear when you look at Lacan that far from replacing Saussure with Freud, he turns Freud Saussurian—"the structure of language is the structure of the unconscious" after all, and language means, in Lacan, exactly Saussure's langue, with no bones about it. And the main fact about the

Saussurian langue and all that depends on it by way of epistemology and the methodology of establishing a network of differences is that it is incorrect. The Saussurian linguistics and its derived world-view is refuted by Chomsky's linguistics, which shows through the instance of language, as it can actually be understood as a set of principles that relate strings of sounds and strings of meanings, that we humans are not characterized adequately by Jakobson's and Saussure's data-processing device for the perception of a network of differences based loosely on the data provided by the world around us (and winding up with a completely different structure for each language so based), but by a richly articulated biologically given set of structures utilizing positive abstract mental entities-rules, relations, abstract representations, systems of recursive generations of strings and constraints on them. Chomsky goes on right after we left off quoting him at the start:

Furthermore, to a greater and greater extent, current work in phonology is demonstrating that the real richness of phonological systems lies not in the structural patterns of phonemes but rather in the intricate systems of rules by which these patterns are formed, modified, and elaborated. The structural patterns that arise at various stages of derivation are a kind of epiphenomenon...[T]he idea of a mathematical investigation of language structures, to which Levi-Strauss occasionally alludes, becomes meaningful only when one considers systems of rules with infinite generative capacity. There is nothing to be said about the abstract structure of the various patterns that appear at various stages of derivation. If this is correct, then one cannot expect structuralist phonology, in itself, to provide a useful model for investigation of other cultural and social systems.10

The system of rules which governs a "cognitive domain" or "mental organ" like language is fleshed out by culture, but in part at least clearly pre-exists it. ¹¹ In a very literal sense, we are born with language. It is among those "innate ideas" we must postulate to account for aspects of human nature which "culture operating on humans characterized by a data-processing device" simply cannot be said to explain.

Language acquisition could not be achieved starting from Saussurian scratch or from "Fort! Da!" Nor could other "mental organs" like "visual perception, formation of theories about the external world, whether those of common sense or of scientific research, etc.," which seem likely candidates for study as one studies the organ language. 12 And hence, while we may leave the ultimate justice of the semiologists' contempt for notions of the "real world" up to the philosophers, we can certainly take

back from them any claims like Heidigger's quoted above, that "Language speaks, not man." It might not be the "real world" we see (though, of course, it is), but it demonstrably isn't a network of differences either.

So let us conclude that differance isn't all there is, and that it is not sensible to deny that human beings can see and think about a common reality, part of their biological, not social, heritage, despite their differing languages. But that does not mean that when we see a movie we look straight through it at what Hawkes, ripping away at his straw man New Criticism, calls "an inherited reality of fixed permanent dimensions" (p. 152), or that we assume concommitantly that the work "can ultimately be reduced to a univocal 'content' beyond which it is improper to go" (p. 155). We can believe that human beings can be in touch with reality, yet not commit ourselves to "'univocal' content"—the many connotations and suggestions in discourse supply aesthetic objects with "implicit meaning" which belongs to the work even though its context is in culture, and this meaning is probably not even exhaustible, much less "univocal."13

We can take this position by unabashedly asserting what the structuralist, on his inadequate linguistics, would deny, that the work itself is real, a perceptible object with emergent qualities, that we can look at it and see those qualities, and that its meaning looms large among them. An "objectivist" position like what we're urging here says basically that when we talk about the meaning of a film we are talking not about ourselves but about the work. Works like films are metaphors writ large. A metaphor is an attribution in some sense contrary to fact, but its very stretching calls attention to the way "there's a certain truth to it." It is an evocative canting, and the meaning of the whole work, made up of many evocatively canted images, is the pitch or attitude implicit in all the ways in which the images fit together. The meaning is emergent from relations among parts. Since it is a set of implications deriving from images brought together so as to fuse with each other and have meaning in the context they make up, it is only interpretable, not decodable, as it would be if there were an a priori message carried in texts coded ahead of time and requiring decipherment.

But obviously the meaning doesn't emerge from the images just by magic. There are suggestions and connotations in images such as those in films—including whole films, we must add, since as relations among images accrete, they fuse into new wholes made up of parts, right up to the level of the total image formed by the film itself. The suggestions and connotations are in them simply because the images share, and resonate to relations among, qualities possessed by what they resemble in the world outside the work: "'desert' connotes unfruitfulness and death, whether a particular reader is aware of it or not; he can

correct and improve his reading by recalling the real effects of deserts." Thus, the work's implications are in fact its pointers toward the meaning of things in the world for people, meanings like the way natural objects function, the expectations stories raise by their relations to other stories, the very iconicity of non-representational forms to modes of human experiencing. All of these count for the "certain truth to it" which metaphoric attributions have, clear up to whole films.

This view accounts for the phenomenon of inexhaustibility of meaning which is so striking about art, and it is worth noting that the principal reason structuralists have such a hard time with that idea is that, basing themselves on the "functionalist" extension Roman Jakobson made beyond Saussure, with its emphasis on speech acts and the different "functions" of languagepoetic, phatic, etc.—they are locked into an assumption that meaning is linked to communication; that is, that there is a problem to explain if somehow one does not describe meaning in terms of a relation among message-producer's intention, its embodiment as message in code sent along a channel in a medium, and its decipherment by an addressee. In describing New Criticism, apologists for structuralism like John Hess always seem to miss the crucial, the fundamental, the initial, the basic New Critical rejection of the idea that artists' intention is important for meaning, and, perceiving that somehow meaning always outstrips what intention can plausibly be imagined to have been, try therefore to account for multiple or implicit meaning by allowing the critic in to produce it. We saw that Barthes does this with his idea that the work is "ours to make and to remake as we please," and both Ben Brewster and Brian Henderson do it, in their similar (though mutually antagonistic) attempts to explain that principal Barthes-imitation in film criticism, the Cahiers "Young Mr. Lincoln."

Brewster on his communication model accounts for "the capacity for the artistic text to accumulate information" by a distinction between the producer's (and ideal reader's) codes and those of the concrete reader whose "reading" imports codes the producer may not have shared, "with the proviso that the 'reading in' of codes is not arbitrary [because] governed by a rule of pertinence."15 Henderson, on his model of S/Z, and perhaps also closely derived from Althusser's article on the Piccolo Teatro, allows meaning to contain the critic's process of "forcing the text," accomplishing a "symptomatic reading," and locating the "structuring absences" which are, he seems to think, self-evidently not part of the text exactly because they are absent from it.16

But even though what is important to a text may not be obviously present in it, we need not go the length of saying that meaning is somehow both the work's and our own, though that is exactly what the motive of Cahiers, Brewster, and Hender-

son is with regard to Young Mr. Lincoln; namely, to formulate a way to like the film without having to praise it, to say that it is terrific for what we can say about it but not for what it can be thought to have intended to say. But if intention is simply no part of meaning, and if "connotations [and suggestions] are objective parts of the meanings of ... terms [and sentences] as they belong to a certain speech-community, just as much as their dictionary [and literal] meanings, though somewhat less obvious,' then it is simply the very quality of a work's literariness that "an important part of the meaning is...presented implicitly, by suggestion and connotation," and this meaning is neither the critic's nor "univocal," but the work's and perhaps limitlessly expansive.17

III

What we have shown to this point, in effect, is that doubts about perception itself, derived from "ideology" or the idea that "language speaks, not man," need not lead us to the belief that we must somehow "found" or "ground" our criticism in some "theory" which is in fact a "method" supposed to be akin to the "method" of human mentation. We know what only a very few principles of mind are, with regard to a very limited area of study; namely, human languages, and principles for other aspects or "organs" of mind are a complete mystery. If we can understand works as metaphoric designs with emergent qualities (among which is meaning), then we need not seek to replace our contaminated perception-systems with "objective," "scientific" theories which lead us beyond ourselves to reality, especially since there are none.

But that is not to say that there may not be considerable heuristic value, "ruleof-thumb" value, in appeal to theories and methods which are unimpeachably aspects of culture (and hence part of the web of connotations which may bear on works), which themselves amount to metaphors with a certain truth to them in which various aspects of human relations to nature are captured, and which even, by their self-elaboration and development, have turned into quite powerful tools for alerting us to aspects of things we might otherwise miss for various reasons (including, for instance, repression), even if they are not the all-purpose primitive terms of sciences of human nature which they would like, like structuralism itself, to be.

In short, an emergent set of connotations in an aesthetic object might well be congruent with one or more (and perhaps more one than another, as we shall see) speculations or pictures of reality. It would be a mistake to see these speculations as determining what a reading of such a work should be (though, of course, the devotees of, say, Lacan or Marx will imply that one should always read everything in the terms they argue are grounded in the truths of

their arguments). But they can provide terms for, and encourage extensions of insights into, relations which would be in the work whether one had the "theory" or not, but which, without the heuristic, one might easily miss. If the unfruitfulness of deserts may be in a work, why then so might be the Oedipus complex, or the anima, or indeed the monstrous figure of the phallic mother.

S/Z works as compellingly as it does as a reading of "Sarrasine," then, because writing (obviously) with his Lacan open before him. Barthes can link the relations Balzac established to the terms and descriptions of those same relations which Lacan has provided more (though not exclusively) discursively. And the Cahiers Young Mr. Lincoln can copy S/Z copying Lacan, and benefit from that too, since it is, after all, perfectly true that Balzac's, Ford's, Lacan's, Barthes's, and Cahiers's pictures of things have in common that they do in fact reflect certain important aspects of reality-for instance, that it is striking and important that people will cling to their own false ("Imaginary") motive-dominated conclusions about things and find it hard both to be free in process (in the Symbolic) and at the same time carry out their necessarily personally constrained purposes (the Law). We don't perhaps absolutely require such fancy language as elaborate theories provide, but that we need them is at least hinted at by the fact that Barthes's and Cahiers's readings of "Sarrasine" and Young Mr. Lincoln are sure a lot better than their predecessors'.

The way to handle the theories which permit such readings, in an objectivist criticism, then, is not to consider them as groundings for claims about meaning which they "prove," but as "pictures" of human nature whose internal relations suggest truths about things to which relations in art works might well be iconic. Depth psychologists, for instance, like the other theories considered here, claim in effect that human nature has a certain shape, so that iconicity of patterns seen in a perceptual object like a film to the patterns of human nature can amount to evidence of how the film should be interpreted. I think we can usefully formulate "stories" for depth psychologies, at least for Freud and Jung, which we can see as amounting to claims for the shape of human nature in terms of which it is at least partially correct to see films make sense.

One notes at first that for both Freud and Jung there is, for the human being, a distinction between the conscious and the unconscious; that is, between what a person thinks he thinks and what actually goes on in his head—there's a thinking part we don't know about that gives us messages. And a principal fact for both Freud and Jung is that the conscious part can't *ignore* the unconscious part. If just squelched, the unconscious part will find a way to make its presence felt, its "shadow" known. The situation in both "stories," then, is that

something strong presses insistently upon a world which would like to ignore it, but can't.

But here Freud and Jung diverge in their stories. For Freud the unconscious tells us lies, but for Jung it tells us truths. The Freudian unconscious tells us that what matters most to us is getting our way with regard to various forms of old business we've met frustration in trying to deal with -for instance, achieving total gratification, being able to get away with anything scotfree, being loved alone by mother, dabbling in shit to our heart's content, etc. But it's obviously not true that that's what matters most, or that we'd be all right if we managed to get our way about these things. So the Freudian success story is learning that it's lies and that we just don't need it: "where id was, there let ego be." A Freudian story will be one of people setting up some "cover story" with which to pretend they're not acting under the sway of lies which, however, clearly move them, but being confronted with evidence of bondage to those lies in a way which lets them become free of them.

Of course there's a Freudian failurestory, too, in which we cling to the lies and can't give them up. And if we resonate to the essentially comic (in Northrop Frye's sense) success stories, or images which connote them, with a feeling of pleased freedom, we resonate to the ironic (again as per Frye) failure ones with a wry recognition, and with more than a little guilty passion, since after all we want to believe those lies, they count a lot for us, and here we have a story of clinging to what we care about. A film like Detour, where the protagonist never does acknowledge his own creation of a dilemma for which he always assigns blame elsewhere, is an occasion for recognition of what we do ourselves, and it's forceful because it's such a straight look at the absurdity of the cover story which it so anxiously (and intensely) projects.

A very clear instance of a Freudian filmmaker, then, is Hitchcock-his people (Melanie Daniels, Guy Haines, Margot Wendice, Charlie Newton, most you can think of) act under the sway of the belief that they're special, entitled, and so they become confronted with proof that something is terribly wrong, that a kind of shadow version of themselves is loose upon the world. But it isn't really them at all-Guy could be Bruno, Charlie could be Uncle Charlie (each is arrogant enough, and selfcentered enough, for it), but they don't have to be. They can simply turn against the shadow and move away, chastened by the recognition of similarity, but, of course, released by the correct inference of nonidentity. Charlie's putting on the victim's ring and dancing a train-door waltz with her uncle amounts to, connotes, a refusal of the lies she had started with, that "we're twins.'

Most of Hitchcock's films are suffused with the sense that we can achieve freedom

and that our troubles come from a willful clinging to a kind of self-righteous complacency which we can and should let slip. So since it's our doing that we get in such trouble, our sin of pride, our complacency, there's a good cheer to the films, a sense of release as we see arrogant sinners (like what we know we are) let go of all the psychic energy required to blind themselves to their errors, and find that it's all right after allin fact, better, since they don't have to work so hard telling themselves they're all right. And, of course, Freud's comedytheory is that it is an economy of expenditure of psychic energy (of the sort which comes when you don't have to repress knowledge) which releases libido as ready cash to spend, so that the feeling of that sudden wealth is experienced as laughter. No wonder we're so cheerful after a classic Hitchcock film-we're richer than we thought!

Now Jung's story is based on a different world-view, a different analysis of human experience, and is differently analyzable into success and failure stories. In one sense, all Jungian stories are failure stories because of his world (that is, they are tragedies), except for those which are incomplete and can end at their success phase. There's a literary parallel here: romance is simply the rising curve of the tragic hero's whole arc up to success and down again, and Jungian romances (dragon slayings and sacred marriages and the like) are temporary achievements which will soon be balanced by their opposites, that being the kind of world his is. For Freud there isn't any particular destiny: you are who you come to be, the world confronts you, you let old business hang you up or you don't. But for Jung there is a destiny: everything is in pairs, and the sure thing is that for any good there's a bad, for every cutting loose there's a sense in which it's also a forsaking, for every act there's a shadow. There's no getting free, no ego remotely capable of being where id was, there's just always the simultaneous presence in the world of the way up and the way down. Everything balances, and for each impulse there's an equal and opposite one to redress what will become unbalanced if not countered like that. Thus the progression toward "individuation" is a freeing from illusion (the illusion that we can be free egos) accomplished by a willing regression into a bondage which is thus in tune with the world's very nature. The victory of the hero is, in a sense, a repression of his opposite, but unlike Freud that opposite is a real part of him, and the unconscious will soon send a message that the apparent victories of the ego are turning it dry and cold and rational, turning it into a cosmic dreamer needing some saving dashes from the self, some emergence of the disreputable double. The Jungian story has the double turning up with truths to tell, being sacrificed, but finally memorialized for having righted the balance, quite unlike what happens with

Uncle Charlie, but exactly like what happens in Ford's *The Whole Town's Talking* when dark disreputable fascinating Killer Mannion turns up to wake the dreamer Jones from his romantic fantasies of Heloise and Abelard, and to be sacrificed so that Jones, "the man who looks like Mannion," may truly live.

To put the general Jungian story in some variosly mythic ways, we must go up the serpent tree of wisdom, from matter to spirit, towards enlightenment and Buddhahood, but any truly enlightened one at once feels the compassion which returns him (or her) down from the now overreached and selfish spirit world to the world of matter, to the pond from the muddy bottom of which the lotus grows, back to the world of illusion-from which, however, the ascent to the clear light is again a sad detaching as well as a natural growth. Jungian stories are, then, cautionary tales, befitting a world-view where the unconscious tells us truths beyond our logic which we are likely to miss. A certain reproach clings to them, quite different from Hitchcock's good cheer. They say, "see how blind we always are," even if they give images of success.

There's a similar insight to Freud's here, of course. Human nature has a darker part which drives us, gives us the energy to do what we have to, but which has to be tamed if not rejected. But the emphases are different. Freud bears down on the gain from getting in touch with the actualities of the world and forsaking our fantasies; Jung bears down on the beneficent side of the energy which must be cultivated and acknowledged for the source it is, the energy which takes on guilt but accomplishes the difficult (and temporary) job of dragonconquering, of freedom-achieving, of struggling to enlightenment, which only comes with its own ambiguous sacrifice (and if I seem to be talking here of Ethan Edwards, so be it—he is indeed a model of this).

Now when we see an image (or a whole film functioning as an image) where a story like that is what resonates for us, we are responding as we do, not because we've read Jung, but because of the truth Jung saw. The filmmaker renders in the artistic way an image for a connoted pattern of general experience which the psychologist renders in a discursive way. But if there is a kind of generality to those stories about human experience, then there is a sort of a priority to this kind of resonance, exactly as there is to the fact that deserts connote unfruitfulness and death. It depended on no relations or emergence for this resonance to be felt, and one might think that resonance to say a Jungian story is, stretching the word only a little beyond what fits traffic signs, a matter of codes: a story resonating like that is almost an encoding of a message given by that aspect of reality to which Jung was attuned and concerning which he had his insights, like the filmmaker. What then of emergence and the metaphor-model,

particularly when both the depth-psychological stories themselves have built in a claim that what does emerge is often to be taken as a cover story for the hidden experience which "really" applies? Does resonance to a depth-psychological story absorb mere surface implications to itself, so that the web of surface relations and their pattern of connotations should be felt as mere cover story for the deeper coded truth? Or does the resonated depth-psychological story merely provide one of the sets of connotations of the imagery which the film contains, which thus is subject to the same process of emergence as anything else? It will help with this to turn to a filmmaker as Jungian as Hitchcock is Freudian; namely, John Ford.

IV

Ford films show that the way to the higher is through the lower, the way to civilization is through the disreputable. Representatives of the disreputable provide the force for more decorous types to go on, but usually lose themselves (which is to say are sacrificed). They pass the torch but, New Moseses all, they are debarred from entry to the promised land. There is usually revaluation, though: finally the sacrificed one is known to be the ground and source of value, a kind of reproachful presence felt most often in the looks back of those who profited from the sacrifice. If occasionally you get an unambiguous Jungian success story like Judge Priest, where the disreputable simply overcomes and floods the world with unity and wholeness, far more often it is like The Sun Shines Bright, in which the now-pitiable outsider judge sacrifices his political career to assert the worth of the disreputable whore who, he insists, must be recognized as part of the town. His solitary funeral procession draws the town in, but the somber post-election parade, so different from the end of Judge Priest, is a valediction: Billy Priest withdraws slowly into the depths of his house (of the unconscious, Jung would surely say) as the young couple he frees by his sacrifice watch him go, like Adam and his wife watching the disreputable followers of the disreputable Frank Skeffington retreat into his house, or as the couple saved with natural medicine by Dr. Bull watch him retreat from the town which doesn't deserve him. Likewise in Tobacco Road, we watch Jeeter Lester settle in at the end on his porch, incorrigible, but so in tune with his life and his God that he seems to stand directly for the Jungian unconscious itself.

Jeeter's Southern disreputable attunedness can only be matched in Ireland: Mary Kate Daniher is directly chastened by a divinely ordered thunderstorm while she kisses Sean Thornton in the churchyard, as Jeeter's conscience is roused by a thunderstorm in the matter of the turnips; and Mary Kate is shown like a nature spirit among her trees and fields much as is Ellie May Lester, who even, at the crucial

instant, raises her foot against the tree of life, one hand at her breast and one at her loins, like the Indian, Greek, and Easter Island tree goddesses Joseph Campbell so convincingly relates in *The Mythic Image*. ¹⁸

The disreputable one passes the torch to those who profit by his sacrifice, and sometimes he sadly watches them go forward into happiness-Victor McLaglen as Citizen Hogan in Hangman's House at the end sees the couple he has saved go forward to a better life while he, like Ethan Edwards, is banished to the desert (though his is in Algiers). But whether the disreputable is watcher or watched, the basic opposition in Ford is that between the warranting disreputables (linked in their excesses to savages like Indians) and the proper civilization-bearers who must be saved by them (and linked in their excesses to vicious social prudes—"there's some things worse than Apaches," as Stagecoach has it). It has been the pattern from the beginning. In Straight Shooting (1917), Cheyenne Harry is a fine Ford drunk and cut-up who has to get his bandit friends to rescue the easygoing farmers. He bids the bandits a fond farewell as they retreat to their stronghold in the rocks, since in that simpler time Harry could change his ways and, unlike Ethan Edwards, have for himself the girl he's saved. And the pattern holds clear up to the end, as Tom Doniphon, the disreputable, sacrifices himself for Ransom Stoddard in a way which ever after keeps that "pilgrim" in his debt, always knowing that the sacrifice was for him, so that the further he goes along the route Tom made possible, the greater the sense of gap between his social ego and that dark self which alone could make it possible.

Ranse's propriety, his rejection of the gun, is one of those denials of the unconscious which Ford's Jungian stories show the "proper ones" have to have beaten out of them: repress the unconscious, and a Liberty Valence-like shadow emerges, only to be overcome by assimilation and acceptance of what it stands for, and a future awareness of one's unpayable debt to the dark forces. Air Mail is a striking instance: Duke Talbot seems a perfect heel to straightarrow Mike Miller, but Mike's inflexible rules release death on the mountain from which Duke saves him with all the drunken bravado Mike has tried to squelch, and Mike is thus released for a better life, more easy-going and accepting. Likewise in The Quiet Man, Sean's rejection of his brawling Irish self is linked to his guilt over the death his fighting brought on, and his new propriety destroys his social life (and his sex life), while it releases Red Will Daniher (as Liberty Valence is released by Ranse's pacifism) to be a bully and lout, a "shadow" version of what acceptance of his force lets him become at the end, a true brother and friend. The end of the film is a Judge Priest-like re-emergence of a boisterous, drunken, rebellious self-hood which, far from killing, cures.

Mogambo displays the same iconic pairing of proper and disreputable in its pair of women. Blonde fragile Linda is so uptight that everywhere she goes the animals die, whereas brunette party girl Kelly, a female Duke Talbot, is easily at one with animals and nature. Vic feels the attraction of Linda's culture and civilization, but fails to spot its prissiness and vindictiveness-Ford hates Grace Kelly for the evils decorum and Englishness bring, where Hitchcock loved her for the possibility of her salvation. Vic is only saved for his desert turned garden (where the gorilla family is the only Fordian group) by Kelly's quick and loving wit—like all Ford disreputables, she is more sensitive than she let on.

We can see, then, that there are two versions of the Jungian story in Ford (appropriate to the directions of travel up and down the serpent tree of wisdom). In one, like The Searchers or The Whole Town's Talking, the world of matter is sacrificed for the heavenly city by the destruction of an agent-representative of the dark forces. In the other, like Rio Grande and Mogambo, the dryness and coldness of the world of spirit, of propriety, can be reinvigorated by contact with the truths of matter. One can give up Bridesdale, or Devonshire, and live in a desert of illusion which one's very presence, as an enlightened ego accepting the depths of the self like a Bodhisattva accepting the illusions of the world through pity, can transform into a garden like Rio Grande's marvelous open-air fort in the desert where the trees shadow the tents by the river while the band plays "Dixie" as (unlike Judge Priest) the cavalry bear the American flag past us as the film ends. But whichever way the stories turn out (and there is at least one other variant, the straight achievement of civilization and spirit by overcoming savagery, as in Fort Apache and Drums Along the Mohawk), they are all contemplations of the relations between the individuating but falsifying spirit and the fertilizing but self-absorbing capacities of nature and matter, of the unconscious.

But a sense has become clear in which, though given Jung's tragic world-view in which all achievements interweave with their opposites, the Jungian story, even if of sacrifice and loss, is a success story. Egoconsciousness tells lies of decorums, separation, and distinction; but as Campbell quotes Coomaraswamy, "an expiation is provided in the sacrifice, where by the sacrificer's surrender of himself and the building up again of the dismembered deity, whole and complete, the multiple selves are reduced to their single principle....Slaver and Dragon, sacrificer and victim, are of one mind behind the scenes, where there is no polarity of contraries; but mortal enemies on the stage, where the everlasting war of the Gods and the Titans is displayed."19 As Jungian stories, resonating to what we have granted is an a priori coding of a very general message of the Jungian world-view.

films like *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence, The Last Hurrah,* and *Fort Apache* are tremendously up-beat stories, for which elegiac tone and the sadness at the fates of the sacrificed heroes is simply a cover story, like those we see covering the messages of Freudian films.

So that returns us to our central question of "conflict of readings," as the lawyers speak of "conflict of laws." A film may resonate to a powerful general story to which it is iconic, as, say, Seven Women resonates to the story of sacrifice of the disreputable hero for a society in which her inheritors get so much from her that it is as if she has part in it, is resurrected in them like Osiris. But the film also has emergent meaning from the relations of the images not only to the story which underlies them, but to the web of connotations of the whole, a world on its own. To put it succinctly for Seven Women, the desert clearly is not only, Jung fashion, the garden seen under the veil of illusion, but is a real desert "connoting unfruitfulness and death." Dr. Cartwright's story is not only one of willing acceptance of her "feminine nature" (symbolized by the Chinese robes which replace her masculine get-up) but also one of her miserable defeat. She is captured by a world where the savages win, where the disreputable is not a life-giving acceptance of the unconscious, but an insensitive brutality, a world where everything Ford has tried to believe in is stood on its ear and rejected: the fight between Woody Strode's Lean Warrior and Tunga Kahn is a worst case version of the fight between Sean Thornton and Red Will Daniher.

The disreputable Cartwright reveals the inadequacy, the concealed autocracy of proper Agatha Andrews, as Kelly reveals the hypocrisy of Linda in *Mogambo*, and we can't miss the feeling of her story like Ethan's or Tom Doniphon's, of one who is aware of the unfairness of a world passing her by and of her necessary guilt, but who is freed by this knowledge for selection of a life finally for others, freed to pass the torch. But we can't miss either the strong sense in which Cartwright outright loses, for herself.

If there is a sense in which the film is a final version, extending to women as Cheyenne Autumn did to Indians and Sergeant Rutledge did to Blacks, the aegis of Ford's personal myth-that myth of the submission of the overreaching individualism of the disreputable unconscious to the developing needs of the society and the conscious ego which nonetheless rests on its base and owes it liberation from heedless savagerythere is also a strong sense of revision of that myth. After all, when hero and dragon are one behind the scenes, we feel uplifted by the esoteric meaning of the act they put on: we have not been simple cannibals to eat the body and drink the blood, but we have partaken of the mystery of psychic divestiture and reconstitution, and we feel like it. But the emergent web of connotations of Seven Women doesn't feel like that

at all.

The seven women who leave don't walk off hand in hand like Dr. Bull and Janet, or the couple in The Sun Shines Bright, but are simply led by the savages into the waste: theirs is a very tenuous and private kind of safety in a world denuded of value, not flooded with it. What is left behind is not rich and fertile like what Kelly and Vic stay in in Mogambo: Cartwright and Tunga Khan are a disreputable couple, all right, but Tunga Khan is no Vic. In fact, there is no Vic in this film, no Martin Pawley, no Ransom Stoddard, no Captain Kirby York, no one for whom the sacrifice of the hero can be a connection between the savage world and the over-civilized one. There are simply the hassles of civilization on the one hand, and a wasteland on the

And as for the hero, Cartwright herself sees her sacrifice coming to nothing, playing up as she does, in her completely ironic way, to the view of feminine submissiveness which her whole life had tried to avoid. In a sense, I grant, like Ethan lifting Debbie, she finally affirms what she has fought against with the new womanliness which dooms her, but the sense of it is completely ironic: "So long, you bastard," is a disgusted acceptance of the defeat involved in becoming "woman" to Tunga Khan's "man," as if it were her "Jane" to his "Tarzan." At least she can take him with her (more like Ethan scalping Scar than lifting Debbie), but she has lost, not won, as Ethan did. She drinks and throws down the poison cup and sits with head bent, waiting for the death which the film renders by pulling away and leaving her in the dark. Of course, she doesn't fall, just poleaxed like Tunga Khan, and in that sense she maintains her resolve and we are left with an image of it. But where Ethan closes himself to go on, with his hara-kiri clasp of the arm, Cartwright throws down the cup and opens herself to this world which kills her and does not get better for what she

From the totality of the film's connotations, then, emerges a world below Northrop Frye's line of experience, a world the tragic patterns of which is in the service of the irony which is parallel to it in the circle of forms, not of the romance which lies next to the tragedies of Ethan and Tom.20 It is defined by the necessity to sacrifice oneself to roles imposed by a masculinity which is stupid and brutal. rather than pleasantly disreputable, and by the wandering in a wasteland which is the only result of this sacrifice. The Jungian purpose seems gone from Ford's universe, not to be reaffirmed in it in new and extended terms.

Now as I read and reread my argument about Seven Women, I find myself being drawn to its opposite, to the claim that we do have here exactly Ethan Edwards, and Judge Priest, and Duke Talbot. This is particularly pressing when I imagine someone

saying, "yes, Ford changes late in his career." At once, like Bazin imagining attacks upon auteurism and feeling that he should leap to the defense of what he is attacking himself,21 I feel like saying, "No, no, Ford is of a piece throughout, the darkness and joy always chasing each other's tails like the cosmic serpent." But this is simply to say that the film is indeed like a metaphor, that its connotations work upon each other to yield an incompatibility, a "counter-factuality," so to speak, which yet has "a certain truth to it" worth contemplating, rather than a message which we might even imagine ourselves trying to decode. The double connotations of Seven Women just sit there opposing each other. We have here a world so bad even a good sacrifice seems not to avail, but the depth of personality reached into for even this unavailing sacrifice overrides its futility. From the whole film, then, emerges a quality of contemplatability which depends equally on resonance to the psychological story and to the connotations of the depicted world of the work. Neither is privileged, and the whole film both re-asserts and deepens our sharing with the disreputable hero, even as it emphasizes the virtually hopeless aspect of a world-desert almost impossible now to see as a veiled garden. The hero with whom we share recedes from existential vividness to the status of a hope, an "as-if" case. Ford tells us as strongly as ever what he would like to believe, but shows more clearly than usual how hard it is to believe it. And this balance would be completely obscured by any attempt to see in Seven Women a dominant coding of the message of either aspect of the emergent

So we have our answer to the question of the relation between the connotations of the depth-psychological stories to which a film may resonate, and those of its other parts. It all works just as Saussure wrongly thought language did: the parts may be coded, as we recognize the words we hear in a language we know, and know the meanings attached to them. But their combinations are not coded-rather, we cast our minds' eyes over the strings of meanings which succeed and intersect with each other, and those meanings fuse to yield an emergent meaning, which, of course, may clash with any individual coded meanings of the parts. This emergent meaning is interpreted by inspection of the relations between the meanings of the words and their context in the external world with which the meanings individually are iconic.

Chomsky's remarks on "the ball was hit by the man" and "John was persuaded to leave" were enough to demolish any notion that the meaning of *sentences* is interpreted like that—we decode sentences by means of a grammar.²² But it *is* the way we interpret discourse, and it is the way we interpret the strings of images in films, whether directly iconic, or semiologically or depth-psychologically or Marxianly de-

rived. Just like the meaning of a sentence as Saussure understood it, or like the meaning of a discourse, the meaning of a film emerges from inspection of the meanings, the connotations, of the parts, in each others' lights. And we might note that this is the exact substance of what the New Criticism, of which so many recent film theorists speak with such ill-formed contempt, always understood.

FOOTNOTES

¹Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics (Berkeley: California, 1977). I use this book extensively here for quotations summarizing structuralist thoughts and thinkers; wherever a citation is by page number only in the text, it is from this source. The book is a good, if starry-eyed, summary of the field, to my knowledge accurate in each regard in which I quote it, and I use it for its greater availability than the primary sources.

²The most accurate, though difficult, systematization of Saussure's linguistics is in Philip W. Davis, Modern Theories of Language (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973), Ch. 2. This is the place to find out in a precise and literal sense what a system of differences actually is, what "syntagmatic solidarity" is, how paradigms work. Less scientific, hence less opaque and useful in conjunction with Davis, on systems of differences, is Edmund Leach, Claude Levi-Strauss (New York: Viking, 1970), Ch. II.

³Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972), pp. 74-5.

⁴Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1968). The bulk of this volume is a very long essay by the editor, Anthony Wilden, on the rather short essay by Lacan and its context. That remains the best introduction to Lacan, though more accessible is Richard Wollheim, "The Cabinet of Dr. Lacan," *New York Review of Books*, XXV (Jan. 25, 1979), 36-45.

⁵Michael Harrington, *Socialism* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1970), p. 41. Andrew Britton, "The Ideology of Screen," *Movie*, No. 26 (Winter 1978-9), 2-28, p. 5.

⁶I summarize here Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review, 1971), pp. 127-86.

⁷See Hawkes on Jacques Derrida for the weight on "illusion of presence" and "differance," and for "structuring absences" see the Cahiers "John Ford's Young Mr. Lincoln," in Bill Nichols, Movies and Methods (Berkeley: California, 1976), pp. 493-529, and especially Brian Henderson, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism (Part II)," Film Quarterly, XXVII (Winter 1973-4), 37-46.

⁸John Hess, "Auteurism and After," Film Quarterly, XXVII (Winter 1973-4), 28-37, p. 36.

⁹Andrew Sarris, "Auteurism is Alive and Well," Film Quarterly, XXVIII (Fall 1974), 60-63, p. 62.

10 Chomsky, Language and Mind, p. 75.

¹¹Noam Chomsky, Language and Responsibility (New York: Pantheon, 1979), p. 49. This volume is surely now the best introduction to Chomsky, though Language and Mind runs a close second. See too, for some of the ideas dealt with here, and especially for corrective to some of the weird misconceptions of Descartes promulgated by structuralists, Noam Chomsky, Cartesian Linguistics (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

¹²Chomsky, Language and Responsibility, p. 45.

¹³For "implicit meaning" see Monroe C. Beardsley (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958), p. 126; for the sense in which such meaning is in the work, see p. 133. The aesthetics urged in this paper are as close to Beardsley's as I can manage.

¹⁴Beardsley, p. 133.

¹⁵Ben Brewster, "Notes on the Test 'John Ford's Young Mr. Lincoln by the Editors of Cahiers du

Cinema," Screen. XIV (Autumn 1973), 29-43, p. 29-43, p. 36.

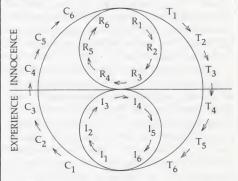
16Henderson, cited. For the Althusser, see Louis Althusser, "The 'Piccolo Teatro': Bertolazzi and Brecht," in For Marx (London: NLB, 1977). The piece is a pleasant but unamazing piece of theater criticism, but seems often to be cited by post-structuralist critics who would like to argue that their insights about aesthetic objects should go to their credit rather than the work's.

¹⁷Beardsley, pp. 133, 126.

18 Joseph Campbell, The Mythic Image (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 260-75: "And the fact that the Buddha's mother giving birth is also represented in this pose [see p. 261] signifies that in her the mothering power of nature (which has been represented form time out of mind in the tree and earth divinities of the popular imagination) became fruitful in its highest good; i.e., the golden fruit of the seed of Buddhaconsciousness which is at the heart of the lotus of this world: OM MANI PADME HUM." (p. 265)

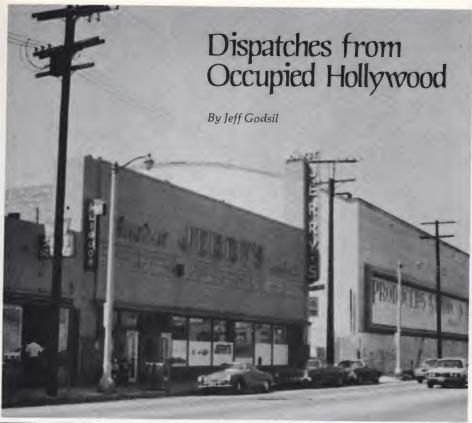
¹⁹Campbell, p. 479.

²⁰See Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), esp. Third Essay: Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths" (pp. 131-239), for the notion of the literary (or filmic, if one prefers the specific category to the general) forms mentioned several times here. The point I call on here, one part of which (for illustration) is that "the phases of tragedy move from the heroic to the ironic, the first three corresponding to the first three phases of romance, the last three to the last three of irony" (p. 219), can perhaps be made clearer by a diagram worked out some 15 years ago by my colleague William C. Strange, making visual sense of what Frye gives only verbally (and confusingly to some; I, for instance, had found it hard to get the picture just right). There are six phases to each of the four forms, with romance existing entirely in the world of innocence (though its phases move, like a romance itself, down towards the world of experience and disillusion before moving up again to firm possession of the "green world") and irony in the world of experience (though its early phases, comic irony or 'satire," tend up towards innocence before its later phases return to defeat and death, to irony proper), while tragedies move individually and in phase from innocence to experience, and comedies from experience to innocence. This can be represented, then, as a circle divided by a line between innocence and experience, within each of which is another circle showing the progression of the two forms romance and irony through their phases, while next to them visually ("corresponding to" them) the phases of tragedy and comedy take the places Frye assigns them in the quote given and in my remark.



²¹Andre Bazin, "La Politique Des Auteurs," in Peter Graham, *The New Wave* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 137-55, esp. p. 138.

²²I choose only two often-cited sentences from many which would make the point. For the first, see for instance (an early but decisive formulation) Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), esp. 5.4 and 5.5 (e.g., pp. 42-44); for the second (with its contrasts like "John was easy to leave") see Chomsky, Language and Mind, pp. 36-37, and all of Ch. 2. John Lyons, Noam Chomsky (New York: Viking, 1970), pp. 60-67 (in fact, all of Ch. 6, and his whole book) are useful here, especially about "The Ball Was Hit by the Man," which Lyons discusses.



IERRY'S MARKET

Within a few days, a mid-sized grocery market on the corner of Melrose and Van Ness in Hollywood bites the dust. As of this writing, the last deliveries of bakery and dairy goods have already been made. The refrigerator cases within, stocked only with milk and beer and a couple of lonely tubs of margarine, will remain on, but not for long. Most of the shelves have been emptied and dismantled, leaving only occasional offerings of scotch tape and paper cups, in silent testimony to the store that was. Jerry's Market is going out of business.

The death of a not-so-super market is hardly cause for much regret. But Jerry's is different. Not only was it my neighborhood market, but it was in this same building that Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) and Mrs. Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck) conspired in hushed tones to do away with Mr. Dietrichson in Billy Wilder's film of Double Indemnity. Lately, it's been the home of Mr. Whipple and too many Charmin toilet tissue commercials.

For years, Jerry's (nobody seems to remember who Jerry was) has sat nestled down the street from Paramount Studios, a few doors down from a revival theater, and surrounded on three sides by Producer's Studio, in strange contrast to the filmoriented working community around it. Never exactly a booming business, I always suspected that Jerry's was allowed to continue fully stocked, because it made a good shooting location.

I decided to investigate the demise of this somewhat obscure Hollywood landmark, and began by approaching the

middle-aged Japanese couple who have operated Jerry's for the last couple of years. They received me, initially, in their usual friendly manner. After all, I was a regular. customer. Then they realized that I wasn't there to purchase one of the last remaining no-pest strips. As I began to ask a few questions, cordiality turned to bitterness-turned to anger. They physically backed away, as if from escaping gas. Retreating onto their side of the language barrier, they merely muttered, "I don't know anything. Talk to them." As for a clue as to who "they" were, I was given only a shrug-like gesture into the unknown. No names, no help at all. Understandable, under the circumstances, I suppose.

I surmised, without much difficulty, that the great historical importance of Jerry's had escaped them completely. I abandoned my probing reporter's pose, and adopted a more personal approach. I asked them what their future plans were, as well as those of the Mexican couple who operated the separate in-store meat department (remember those?). They wanted no part of this inquisition, however, so amid the sounds of shelves being ripped from their casings and the presence of suspicious eyes, I departed.

As I walked out of that sad place, all I could think of was how I'd never buy another can of motor oil there and never again have to hear, "Car needs food too, yes?"

My next stop was the office of Producer's Studio. A rather shabby office, at that. Certainly not the kind of headquarters for a cinema conglomerate about to swallow up a fledgling little Japanese market for convenience and profit. And alas, it is not.



The studio has no claim on Jerry's and, apparently, no great interest in it. Yes, it's been used occasionally for commercial work, but not a great deal lately. "We don't have any control over it. Hell, we can't even control ourselves. We're just glad to be able to use the parking lot."

Who then were the mysterious "them" responsible for this deed and what do they hope to gain?

My search led to Raleigh Enterprises and an immaculate suite of offices in a towering office building overlooking Sunset Strip. I was warmly greeted (nice for a change) by a real estate manager in a leisure suit, who explained that Raleigh Enterprises had acquired the land under and around Jerry's, Producer's and the Encore Theater a few months earlier. The market just wasn't cutting it and so must go. The future of the building is dubious. If it doesn't



draw rentals from filmmakers on a pretty regular basis, it will be razed and the parking lot will get that much bigger. Nobody really cares about it one way or the other, and even less about *Double Indemnity*. (Oh yeah, with Dick Powell, right?).

A similar fate seems to await the Encore Theater as well. A super revival house for the last year and a half, the Encore may soon become a Spanish-speaking theater. ("After all, it is becoming their neighborhood.") I guess the writing was on the wall on this one, what with the pleas for donations becoming more frantic with each

monthly mailer. It already looked like there was no hope for improvements on those seats (a recent marathon sent many buffs to the chiropractor). A tragedy, nonetheless.

An attempt is being made to spruce up the neighborhood and erase some of the gangland graffiti that mars the walls. This may not be so easy. A recent prophecy on the wall of a pay-toilet in a local laundromat reads: "Thank you, Jimmy Carter, for opening your borders to us and letting us come in to fuck it up for everybody else. This is our home now. Angelenos, get out."

I plan to move soon.



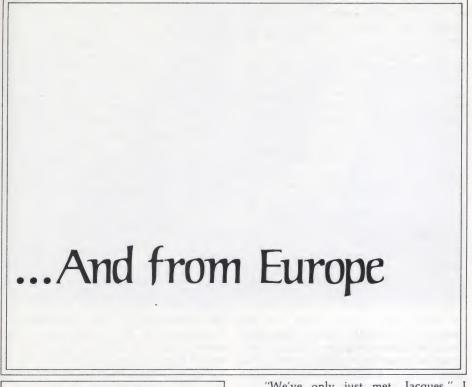
CONTRIBUTORS: Ken Alakine is preparing an article on Hollywood. William Cadbury teaches film theory and criticism at the newly formed Film Studies area of the Department of Speech at the University of Oregon. Gabriel Conroy is a journalist and deals in memorabilia. David Coursen's article on Jon Jost's Last Chants for a Slow Dance will appear in the Spring Film Quarterly. Dan DePrez is a free-lance music critic and humorist. Sid Falko is a press agent for a New York firm. Jeff Godsil manages a prominent Los Angeles record store. Pat Holmes has been the film critic for the metropolitan Hollywood News. Gary Hood is co-owner of Limelight Productions and DP for their first feature, The Dead. He has worked on Living Together, Blackjack's Family, and Deafula, the first feature film in sign language for the deaf. Russ Island is a pen-name of a Portland-born cinema addict and absurdist poet who more or less makes his living as a photo-offset lithography cameraman. Johannes Lucas is writing Empty Street, the first volume of a large novel. Sean Mercer recently returned from Africa. Ted Price is currently completing a long study of Hitchcock. He and his wife, Barbara Anne, are co-authors of two Annotated International Bibliographies, one on Fellini, published last year, the other on Hitchcock, to be published next year, both by Scarecrow Press. He teaches film and literature at Montclair State College. Laura Sanden lives in San Francisco and is writing a children's book. Charles Schwenk is a Doctoral student and Associate Instructor at Indiana University School of Business. His list of film credits was recounted in our last issue, thereby making it a collector's item. Jake Uhl is the pseudonym of a prominent film critic. Maggie Van Rossum resides in Portland, Oregon. Richard Weholt has written for several Northwest magazines. Pietro Ferrua teaches French at Lewis and Clark College, Greg Reese is a humorist.

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By Daniel DePrez

WILD ON THE SCREEN

With a whisper and a sigh, our plane touches down in Clermont-Ferrand, home of Small Change, The Sorrow and the Pity and Ma Nuit Chez Mave. A short drive into the country and we are at the set of The Sun Is Blue, The Countryside Stinks, the latest film to feature the animalistic talents of Francois DePaul.

From total obscurity, DePaul exploded onto the international film scene as the sexy rogue in Jean-Paul Imbroglio's Sexy Rogue. As if DePaul's sizzling premiere left a doubt in anyone's mind, the actor solidified the position of his raw, primitive talent with his second film, One Does Disgusting Things In Public, The Other Doesn't.

Jacques Filet-Gumbo, the translator assigned to assist me, greets me as I step from my car. A great lumbering bear of a man, he could easily have been cast as a thug in one of the Bogart/Cagney gangster epics. A member of the Resistance during WWII, Jacques won distinction as a mine detector (a position to which he was elected by his comrades). When a field or road was suspected of being mined, Filet-Gumbo would lay his considerable bulk down and roll around the field or road until every mine had exploded underneath him. In honor of his work, fellow Resistance members nicknamed Jacques "Muqueux-Cerveau" ("Mucuous-Brain").

Filet-Gumbo smiles as he recognizes me and gives me a hug, as though we are old friends.

"Bonjour, mon ami, my old friend," he roared.

"We've only just met, Jacques," I smiled sheepishly.

Filet-Gumbo took from his mouth the paper match with which he had been picking his teeth and said, "What? We are not old friends?" He then began picking his teeth more furiously than ever, which caused the match to light. This delighted him and he gobbled the flame greedily, his anger subsiding.

In an open field, the next shot of the day was being set up. As technicians shuffled about, DePaul was relieving the tension by passing around humiliating photos of one of the extras. Then, without warning, he punched out a grip, smiled and shouted, "Hallelujah!," brought out a handkerchief and cried for a moment, laughed hysterically, and then began pacing nervously. "Francois is a man of many moods," Jacques whispered to me as an explanation.

DePaul then sighted us, and bounded over to greet me. He had the studied grace of Cary Grant in *To Catch A Thief*, the streetwise savvy look of Harvey Keitel in *Taxi Driver*, and the goofy grin of Robert De Niro in *Bang the Drum Slowly*. After a manly handshake, the three of us retire to DePaul's trailer for coffee.

From Francois's broken English and from Filet-Gumbo's translation, I learn the actor's background. Born of rich parents, Francois was a quiet child. Well, dull, actually. He never had to steal to get a meal, never had to offer his sister to G.I.s, never had to fight to stay alive. Nor did he devote his days to study. Neither a brain nor a dullard, the young DePaul was merely boring. Occasionally he would add a stamp to his collection, and then lapse back into his old boring self. Basically, the child would have made Calvin Coolidge seem

vivacious by comparison.

Several years ago, however, Francois could feel a current ripple through the French cinema, and he decided to become a brute. After a year of study at France's famous L'Ecole Pour Les Bettes, DePaul began brutalizing the helpless, and (especially) raping countless women.

As Francois himself describes the situation, "The rape is not bad. The victim causes the crime to happen to herself. The women I rape, they like it. They try to cover up for it. When a woman, she scream and cry and bite, then kick you and run away, then bite and claw some more when you catch her, then cry when it's over, it is just say 'yes.' We French understand women."

DePaul had quit his job as a computer programmer and become destitute until, like the small lad in *Small Change*, he was living in abandoned houses. When he could find the time between rapes and unaggravated assaults, Francois did his best to get arrested. It was during one of his stays in jail that the acting great was discovered.

Jean-Paul Imbroglio was looking for a new talent for his film Sexy Rogue. The director knew exactly what he wanted, and after a brief scan of DePaul's jail record, knew that he had his new star. The transition from primitive to screen primitive was not easy, however. Throughout his first film's shooting, Francois was under constant scrutiny from a temperament coach hired by the studio. At the beginning, scenes were shot on the first or second take. Things soon began improving, however, and eventually the film was weeks off schedule thanks to fights on the set and DePaul's brooding.

During our brief talk, Francois, like Henry Fonda in *Cheyenne Social Club*, had been cracking nuts by hand and munching on them. Next, just like George C. Scott in *Dr. Strangelove*, he gets up out of his chair. The three of us go back outside for the next scene.

In this scene, DePaul is trying to prove to his wife (played by the lovely Renee DuLait) that he loves her by selling her to a midget.

DuLait, a heterosexual until she met DePaul, has been quoted as saying, "Francois will be a big hit in the United States because he is just like America: there is so much there and none of it is worth a person's attention."

My feelings exactly, I think to myself as I get into my car. This writer predicts a huge following for this lovable animal in America, where such creatures are either put in front of a camera or put to sleep. This thought vitalizes me, and, just like the man in the car in North By Northwest (I think it's North By Northwest, I mean: it's the one where Cary Grant is going to be chased by a plane. It's either North By Northwest or Notorious. Anyway, it's the car that Cary Grant tries to hitch a ride from, but it just passes him by), I drive down a road, out of the picture.



Days of Heaven

Terrence Malick's Days of Heaven is a wonderfully colorful tapestry. It flows from shot to shot, scene to scene, in the carefree yet persistent manner of the wind, the river, the rain, and other elemental entities represented in the film. Days of Heaven is an uplifting, even hopeful film—despite the tragedy of the main characters—in its portrayal of a time in America (at least in Malick's interpretation) when people carried a humanistic pride in themselves.

The optimistic hopes and dreams of the characters is an integral part of Days of Heaven. The people of the film each have hopes for their lives, but it would seem that none of them has come true-even for the rich wheat farmer (Sam Shepard) with his huge land holdings and incongruously ornate house on the Texas plains. The farmer was unaware of his desires, his lacking, before meeting Abby (Brooke Adams), a young woman hired for the wheat harvest. Abby tells the farmer that she could have been a dancer, and tells Bill that before the farmer proposed to her she received compliments from many rich men. Bill (Richard Gere), Abby's lover, who, with his sister Linda (Linda Manz), was also hired for the harvest, wants to make something materialistically substantial out of his life. Bill has lived believing the gambler's fallacy that one day his luck would change and he confesses this to his character counterpart, the farmer, in one scene. It is not important what the desires of the individual are, only that these wishes have not been fulfilled. Bill wants to own the kinds of things the farmer has; for him it is a visible sign of a buffer against the hard times Bill has always had to endure. The farmer wants Abby so that he may complete his life; he is dying and perhaps knows inside that his life is nothing without loving someone. These desires are understandable and justified until yearned for with a fervor that generates chaos and pain in another person's life.

Abby doesn't desire with the intensity that the farmer and Bill do. She appears to be satisfied with whatever situation she finds herself in at any moment. Abby only partially wants to be a dancer; she expresses no other aspiration during the course of the film. At the beginning she is picking through scrap heaps in Chicago to help supplement Bill's income. Abby slips as easily into the lifestyle the farmer provides-although it is not provided by the man she perhaps at first wanted. Of note is the moment when Bill returns to the farm after a long absence and sees Abby on the back porch of the house dancing. Bill at that moment must realize that he has failed to provide for Abby the things he wanted for her and that she has fully accepted the farmer as her husband. Her gradual progression from one conviction to another tells of her flexible nature, her free-flowing spirit.

These desires appear to have an opportunity for success or failure for the three main characters within the microcosm of the wheat field setting. Along with the beauty of the 20,000 acres of wheat field, the farmer's house stands as a full-sized doll house in the middle of a playground for the imagination; a paradise, a heaven. After the harvest is completed and Abby has decided on the farmer's invitation to stay, the farmer, Abby, Bill and Linda do more playing than work. During this time the characters chose for the most part to ignore their goals and enjoy the simple life in each other's company. Linda says, "In my opinion, as long as you're around, you should have it nice." Soon, however, the unfulfilling unsavoryness of the situation begins to prey on the minds of both Bill and the farmer. Abby's happiness is the common concern of both men, though they are unaware of the selfishness of their desires deep inside. Abby becomes an undeclared prize which neither can win, and when this becomes apparent the dreamland playground disintegrates.

The main characters of Days of Heaven all have objective correlatives—as Richard Corliss has observed in his review (New Times, 2 October 1978)—and, in fact, each member of the love triangle has more than one. Abby's obvious correlative is the herd of wild horses seen in the background as she contemplates the proposition Bill has made for her about marrying the farmer. In this sequence Abby is also seen against the background of her elemental correlative: water, as in the scene when Bill bathes Abby's legs in the river; against a waterfall on the honeymoon; and when she and Bill go to the river on their midnight tête-à-tête. We must interpret the significance of both correlatives in order to reach an insight into Abby's nature. What seems immediately characteristic is freedom. Water, in the form of the river, flows on without surcease. It can be directed, as Abby is directed by Bill's pressure to marry the farmer for his money, but it continues to flow. The wild horses roam on the farm uninhibited.

It would seem that though the farmer is associated with animals (his horse and dogs) it is simply an extension of the farmer's earthy sensibilities that Linda, whose elemental correlative is earth, recognizes and is sympathetic to. Abby's freedom becomes apparent in the closing moments of the film as she leaves Linda in a girl's home and boards a train to points unknown; starting over again seemingly unencumbered by grief for Bill and the farmer.

Bill's objective correlative is the Machine, which he seems destined to work with all his life. He is often seen working near a steam thresher, or against a background of steam tractors. He is later associated with his bright red motorcycle. Bill's elemental correlative is obviously fire. It is present when we first see him in the mill as he is stoking a furnace. All the machinery Bill is associated with utilizes fire to function; furnaces, steam tractors, the motorcycle. It is fire that sweeps through the wheat fields, destroying the crop and thus the farmer's fortune, and this tragedy is foretold in the fire at the dance. Abby agrees to stay on with the farmer and the two of them dance around the fire. We see a shot of Bill watching them dance through the fire; he turns to leave the dance and a log that has been in the foreground of the shot falls into the fire in a shower of flaming sparks.

In the destruction of the wheat field, it is important to note that it is not instigated by Bill, but by exterior aggression. All the fights we see involving Bill are started by others: the steel mill foreman, the sacker who starts a fight by making suggestive comments about Bill and Abby's relationship, and the farmer setting the big fire with his lantern. This suggests Bill is not an aggressive force himself, but rather has low tolerance for suppressive forces of aggression around him. This makes Bill's character more worthy of admiration and pity. We feel that Bill should be handled as one handles fire. Note that when Bill and the farmer are fowl hunting and Bill is contemplating shooting the farmer, he cannot quite bring himself to do it. Bill's correlatives converge in the burning wheat field sequence; one shot shows a tractor slowly plowing through flaming debris apparently as out of control as the fire itself.

The farmer's objective correlative is the most directly linked physically. His many acres of wheat and his looming house on a nearly flat landscape represent in both real and symbolic terms the manner in which he stands in accomplishment above ordinary men. The farmer's house symbolically states the farmer's situation, sitting in the middle of the land of plenty, isolated from people who are his accomplished equals, surrounded by modern-day financial serfs. The house and farm spread are more imposing than the farmer himself; the farmer being, as Linda observes, humbled by his humanity and deep-rooted respect for the soil that provides his wealth.



Days of Heaven: Brooke Adams and Sam Shepard.

The windmill generator atop his house with which he is so often seen is a clue to the farmer's elemental correlative: air, or wind. The wind is as omnipresent in Days of Heaven as the farmer is through his property. The sheer size of the farmer's spread should humble the likes of Bill, as the farmer's gradual absorbing of Abby humbles Bill, but instead it fires desire in him. Bill has no ambitions for tumbling the farmer from his position, only to be present when the eventual death of the farmer makes his fortune up for grabs. Such a thing could be the "big score" Bill mentions to the farmer, the one he thought was always coming when he was younger. Only through the injection of the elemental and social chaos represented by Bill does the farmer get brought down. When Bill has returned to the farm after his absence and the farmer observes Abby and Bill together, not knowing it is a moment of farewell between them, he interprets this as a direct threat to his happiness and marriage. The farmer's jealousy, and concern for keeping that which he considers no man can take away, can only fan an unwanted flame. As Linda notes about Bill: "He seen how it was-she loves the farmer." It is the farmer, not Bill, who instigates an act of vengeance. When the wheat field has caught fire, the farmer confronts Abby-he realizes he has been betrayed—but his anger and jealousy prevent him from seeing that Abby truly has fallen in love with him. The farmer accuses Abby of being a liar and ties her to a porch post of the house; what he is in essence doing is tying her to himself.

As Linda, Bill and Abby drift down the river Linda notes, "Nobody's perfect. There was never a perfect person around. You just got half devil and half angel in you." We all have the same capacity for good and evil, and it is this sensibility that runs true through Days of Heaven. There are many references to angels and devils, Heaven and

which Linda mentions in her narration of the train ride to the farm: that a fellow named Ding Dong said one day the earth will be consumed in flames, the "people going to Heaven are gonna escape all that." Also that, "If you're bad, God don't even hear you." The farm is symbolically changed from a heaven into a hell in the course of the film. When Bill, Abby, and Linda arrive at the farm, they ride through what can be considered the gate of a heaven. When they leave the farm, after the destruction of the wheat field and the death of the farmer, they can be considered to be riding, in the reversal of the original shot, through the smoldering gates of a hell. Perhaps in fleeing in a boat, the characters can be viewed as floating down the River Styx. The farmer tells Abby, "You're like an angel." She replies, "I wish I was." Guilt from crumbling morality affects Bill and Abby, most particularly. While the flying circus is visiting and the pressure between Bill and the farmer is ready to give way, Linda senses a rise in the spooky feeling of invading evil; "I think the Devil was on the farm. He just sits there laughing while the snakes eat your eyes out. They get inside you and eat all your systems out." Linda might possibly be speaking of the farmer, who is gradually being blinded by his jealousy. Abby tells Bill when he is pressuring her to marry the farmer, "You never used to be like this." And the farmer later says nearly the same thing to Abby, "Why are you so uneasy with me? Seems like I don't know you." Though Abby is burdened by guilt from the farmer's death, she is somehow purged of her guilt in Bill's death. The secret is perhaps hinted at in the shots following the fire. A tall white bird stands alive on the charred ground. Next year there will be new wheat to cover the burnt area. Note that there is still an abundance of life present in the film after the deaths of the farmer and Bill.

Hell in the film, not the least important of

There are people on the shores of the river, people on the streets in the town, with bands playing while Abby is waiting for the train that will take her away.

Days of Heaven is a successful exercise in shorthand storytelling, yet we still know what has been said before. We witness key sections of each conversation, each decision. Sometimes an entire scene has been reduced to a single sentence that, in context, has all the richness of a longer scene. Sometimes shots negate any need for explanatory dialogue. A case in point is the scene where Gere returns to the farm on a motorcycle. He sees a bicycle leaned against the steps of the front porch, followed by a shot of a potted plant on the front porch, the wind blowing through the leaves, then the front doors, the right-hand door slightly ajar. These three shots establish elegantly that life on the farm has gone on as usual without Gere's presence.

At important times in the characters' development two actors rarely share a shot. Note especially when Shepard asks someone off camera if they know anything about Adams. Also when Shepard asks Adams why she is uneasy around him; we see only her face in close-up and Shepard's hand and chest. A similar shot of Adams occurs when she and Gere have run out to the river at night and are discussing their initial attraction to each other.

There is great beauty in the way Malick and Nestor Almendros set up a shot; the movement of busy workers in the background as Gere and Adams talk; the symmetry, the balance of the shot of the sitting room where Gere wanders through the house, the wagon out the center window now in view; the exquisite shot of Linda Manz watching the train take her friend away, the sun setting behind her; the important shot of Bill and the farm foreman (Robert Wilke), best men at the wedding of Abby and the farmer; the shot of the crew of workers at sundown walking in from the fields; the gracefulness of the airplanes taking off from the farm, and their sleek path through the frame, balanced by the placement of people and background of the house.

The remarkable binding factor of Days of Heaven is Linda's narration of the story. Linda Manz's voice, accent, and phrasing is beautiful. She is a remarkable observer, being at times insightful, at others comical. Linda's musings on the river shore people, on Bill and Abby, on her friend (Jackie Shultis), on the farmer, and her own feeling, carry the story along, keeping it from getting heavy-handed. Her thoughts on being a "mud doctor" and on talking to the wheat patches and how they talk to her at night in her dreams are all wonderful, as is the moment she is feeling a little sorry for the farmer because he didn't have anyone to hold him when he needed someone.

If I may take a line of Linda's out of context to explain how I feel about the film, "It's good. I like it."

Carl Bennett

The China Syndrome

The nuke nuts with their freebie tickets from the local radio station start arriving two hours before show time. The word has been out on the grapevine for months that this is the film nobody could stop, not the utilities, not the nuclear industry, not the big studios. This is no documentary shot with a 16mm Bolex by a guy a couple of years out of the USC film school. This is the real thing: big budget, Hollywood, made by a bunch of movie brats who know their way around the Big City. This one is going to reach out and get to the public, the kids, and it's going to tell the truth for a change. This time the bastards can't suppress it and they can't ignore it. Bring your granola. It's an event!

The newspaper ad says it all: a furrowbrowed Jack Lemmon, a nauseated Jane Fonda, a startled Michael Douglas, and an ominous, shimmering cloud.

"My God, Doctor—there are some things man was not meant to know!"

Actually, the teaser reads, "Today only a handful of people know what 'The China Syndrome' means...Soon you will know."

For the unenlightened, "China Syndrome" is a vernacular phrase coined by the happy-go-lucky nuclear scientists and technicians of the old Atomic Energy Commission, back in the days when the U.S. government was spewing out pellets of bomb-grade Plutonium 239 like so many M&M's, and the first, crude civilian power reactors were coming on line. The term was used to describe the worst possible accident (or "event" in AEC terminology) that could befall a conventional reactor. The process was as follows: First a "nuclear excursion" (uncontrolled chain reaction) or a sudden breakdown of the temperature or pressure maintenance system could cause a "meltdown" of the reactor core. The intense heat from the meltdown, or a possible steam explosion, could cause a breach in the containment vessel surrounding the reactor assembly. If that were to happen, the molten reactor core could conceivably vaporize a path several meters into the ground, like one of those Buck Rogers gizmos that could eat its way clear through the earth. Hence, "China Syndrome," from the surprised expressions on the faces of the Sianking Agricultural Commune when a molten blob of highly radioactive metal emerges from their rice paddy. Engineer humor, you know.

Producer Michael Douglas is not amused. Neither is his co-star, Jane Fonda, but then she hasn't been amused by much of anything since Barbarella. In The China Syndrome (Columbia/IPC), a young (i.e., middle-aged) production team attempts to achieve that elusive balance between mass entertainment and socio-political activism. Although it has its light, and even satirical moments, the film lays down, as we used to



The China Syndrome: Jane Fonda and Michael Douglas.

say in the sixties, a very heavy message. Heavy enough.

"A China syndrome accident could release enough radioactive gas to cover the State of Pennsylvania," grimly (and ironically) explains the physicist to whom Douglas takes documentary evidence of a coverup at a local power plant.

Well, Pennsylvania hasn't amounted to much, anyway, since the shift of wealth and population to the Sun Belt. But Southern California, that's something else. Man, you're talking about some of the most valuable development property in the United States. Zap it with eight billion picocuries of hard radiation, and all it would be good for is transient camps for illegal aliens.

In spite of the Ever Present Danger, nobody is rushing out to liquidate their assets in Los Angeles County. In recent years LA has been cinematically reduced to rubble by everything from earthquakes to a crackup of the continental shelf. Disaster is a way of life, something you toss up on the back lot at Warner's on Monday and knock down for the cameras on Wednesday. By Friday it's in the can, and the next week it's opening at Loeb's Oriental. Off the screen, the good life in the suburbs has gone on in spite of mudslides, drought, and race war, so it's pretty hard for the populace to get very excited about something that exists only as an abstract order of probability in a government computer. Even the prospect of nuclear catastrophe is pretty old hat to a part of the country where people celebrated the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 by building concrete backyard bunkers and stocking them with automatic weapons and cases of bourbon.

As ace newsperson Kimberly Wells discovers, nobody wants to hear about radiation poisoning and cancer, when there are far more important things going on, such as a hot air balloon landing on top of a skyscraper or a baby tiger being born at

the zoo. Fonda is almost too convincing as a TV anchorwoman and roving reporter. The hard-driving, careerist ball-buster has replaced the whore with a heart of gold as a celluloid cliche, but Fonda retains just enough quirky individualism to make the process of consciousness raising reasonably believable when her hard-won professional identity comes into conflict with the vestigial remains of her 1960's-era ideals.

The instrument of her conversion is the bearded and boyish Douglas, as Richard Adams of Richard Adams Productions ("RAP"). He is the kind of unreconstructed Berkeley style radical whose words and deeds draw cheers from the campus firebrand that survives somewhere within the heart of the greying CPA or social worker who makes up the film's primary audience. Adams, an independent filmmaker, is the cinematographer for Kimberly Wells's energy series. They happen to be at a local nuclear power plant just at the moment when an earthquake combines with human error to cause a near failure of the emergency cooling system. A loss of coolant accident (LOCA in nuclearese) could theoretically expose the reactor core to a massive increase in temperature as the chain-reaction careens out of control, although the plant has many redundant systems built in, both automatic and manual, to prevent such a catastrophe. As a last resort, the reactor can be "scrammed," or closed down by means of neutron-absorbing materials, but the process is not as simple as just clicking a wall switch. It involves electronic control and monitoring devices, servomechanisms, relay, pumps, piping, literally thousands of individual components, many of them under constant physical, chemical, or radiological stress. Adams secretly and illegally manages to get footage of activity in the control room during the "event," and his evidence shows that the plant had come much closer to a major accident than utility company spokesmen were willing to admit.

With such a promising, albeit coincidental, premise, the plot should really take off, right? Not exactly. The problem with doing a serious film about complex technology is that a lot of things have to be explained along the way, so more time has to be devoted to talking heads than to busting heads. Douglas and a trio of screenwriters have gone to a great deal of effort to establish credibility and verisimilitude, sometimes at the expense of tension and action. Scenes shift back and forth between the procedural details of Kimberly Wells's attempts to track down the story, and the procedural details of how the utility company finances, licenses, and operates its nuclear power facilities with a minimum of public interference. To carry this much detail, the plot has to be trimmed down to melodramatic size. "It's not about China," say the radio ads, "it's about choices."

The China Syndrome leaves little doubt about what the choices are. The script sets up a good-guys-bad-guys dichotomy reminiscent of the "merchants of death" themes so popular between the two world wars. The director makes it even easier to tell the two apart. The bad guys are greedy corporate bigwigs and engineer types who blindly follow orders without any regard for possible consequences. They wear three-piece suits and drive large, dark-colored American cars that pollute the atmosphere and consume large amounts of energy. The good guys are hard-nosed investigative journalists and corporate whistle blowers. They drive brightly painted imports and compacts and can usually be seen in shirtsleeves with their hair tousled in all directions. The bad guys attend lavish dinners in luxurious highrise penthouses, where they make shabby deals and put in the fix to insure billions of dollars in windfall corporate profits. The good guys grab a sandwich and a beer at the local tavern, where they talk about what the Rams are going to do to the Steelers.

The lead good guy is Jack Godell, a longtime nuclear engineer whose entire life is his work. Jack Lemmon started out his career playing the junior executive on the make, type cast as the gopher who has to accommodate himself to the everyday, petty corruptibility of an exploitative economic system. Twenty years later, he's finally got it made. In Save the Tiger, he owns his own factory; in Airport '78 he is the pilot of a 747 flying the Bermuda Triangle route; and in The China Syndrome he is in charge of the control room of a nuclear power generating facility with ultimate responsibility for all the delicate tradeoffs between safety and performance.

Nobody agonizes like Jack Lemmon and nobody projects world-weary cynicism like Fonda, so the matchup should be a boffo box office combo. It would be, except that the story keeps getting in the way. Between the technical explanations by the scientists and engineers and the Oilcan Harry antics of the corporate bad guys,

there isn't any time for romance. And, besides, too much sex would put the kibosh on a PG rating. The producers want to get the word across to younger audiences, so a high-speed auto chase is substituted for a high-temperature nude scene. With Fonda, as with the nuclear reactor, you can't expose too much of the core without risking a serious meltdown.

The film is more successful when it deals directly with the love-hate relationship between human beings and their machines. Although director James Bridges is no George Lucas, there is a wealth of technical detail about the complex synergy that makes technicians both the masters and the slaves of their technology. The original treatment of the film had the somewhat Fritz Langian title, Power, which referred to both the physical definition, as energy applied over time, and the more ambiguous political usage, which can be seen as resources made available to the corporation for the duration of the plant's forty-year operating life. Wisely, somebody decided that the kids who watch second feature movies in third-run drive-ins would be more interested in an all-American science fiction-suspense thriller-paranoid fantasy than in the expressionistic weltanschauung of Metropolis '79.

Consequently, while the straightforward photography and direction capture the physical appearance and some of the feel of a nuclear power plant, what is missing is the sense of scale. The cinematography does not really show the sheer size of the generators, pipes, and reactor vessel in relation to the human body; the complexity of the control system relative to the ability of the individual to cope with it; and most of all, the magnitude of potential and kinetic energy latent in the nuclear fission process.

What the film lacks in *mise en scene*, however, it makes up in crackling dialogue. Americans have an almost religious passion for jargon, and shop talk has a strange, incantory power. Mission control in Houston; the bridge of a *Trident* class nuclear sub; the War Room under the Pentagon; even the main booth at Channel 3 news. It's all the same bank of computer consoles and video screens, the same beaded brow, the same terse phrasing.

"We're disconnected from the grid."
Sweat, sweat, sweat.
"Stabilize the reactor."
Whizz, whir, hum.

"That's it. We're home free!" Cheers and backslapping.

Dialogue is one of the strong points of 1970s filmmaking, and it saves *The China Syndrome* from being the exercise in socialist realism that some nuclear industry spokesmen have made it out to be. Probably the best line in the movie occurs in an exchange between Jack Godell and his assistant, an old utility hand who has been with the company for twenty-five years and lacks the professional status of the trained

engineers from the navy nuclear submarine

program. Days after a seven-hour grilling by a Nuclear Regulatory Commission hearings panel, Godell asks him:

"What makes you think they're looking

for a scapegoat?"

"Tradition," is the laconic reply.

In one of the movie's pivotal scenes, Jack Godell confronts a quality assurance inspector employed by the plant's construction contractor. The man has fraudulently signed his name to a series of weld x-rays, when in fact the same one has been duplicated over and over.

"Those welds have held for six years and they'll hold for another six thousand," protests the QA inspector.

Godell threatens to take it to the NRC. The engineer blows up.

"You're not talking to any pissant utility company," he yells. "We're the world's largest contractor!"

In real life, the world's largest contractor, or close to it, is the Bechtel Corporation, the San Francisco-based multinational that made headlines in the business press when a federal investigation revealed that the company was one of the leading supporters of the Arab-inspired boycott of supposedly Zionist U.S. firms. In addition to its oil work, Bechtel specializes in do-itvourself modifications to reactor installations for such electric utilities as Pacific Gas and Electric (thinly disguised as "CG&E" in the movie). According to nuke nut folklore, PG&E has already suppressed at least one film critical of the industry, and the company coordinated the counterattack against a spate of "nuclear safeguards" initiative measures in the Western states during the 1976 elections. Like other major utilities who operate nuclear power plants, PG&E has its own private intelligence apparatus with computerized dossiers on critics of nuclear power.

In reel life, these corporations will go to almost any lengths to save the economically foundering nuclear power industry. Nuclear power has survived for years on direct and indirect subsidies from a seemingly bottomless federal trough, but recent cutbacks have hurt the industry badly. Now that the beast is wounded, aggressive younger technologies are moving in for the kill. The law of the free enterprise jungle prevails, and the industry lashes out in rage and frustration. Coverups, threats, physical intimidation, murder; it's all in a day's work for the evil chairman of the board and his faceless minions.

Typical of the plot devices tossed into *The China Syndrome* more for their topical relevance than for their cinematic value is the murder-by-accident subplot. About two-thirds along in the movie, Richard Adams's not-very-bright Chicano assistant doesn't make the connection between the envelope of incriminating industrial x-rays on the passenger seat of his Ford Maverick and the oversized, dark brown van that is trying to run him off a deserted coastal highway. The incident is based, of course,

on the Karen Silkwood accident-suicide-homicide, where a worker at the Kerr-McGee plutonium factory in Oklahoma was killed in a car wreck while traveling to congressional hearings on employee safety and possible diversion of fissionable materials. Kerr-McGee officials and FBI investigators tried to portray the deceased as a manic-depressive crank junky, while nuclear critics claimed she had been murdered to keep her from talking.

The Silkwood case would make a great premise for a movie, say, one in which a long-distance trucker, played by Burt Reynolds, comes along just in time to save Sally Fields from mayhem at the hands of corporation hit men, then uses the CB bands to thwart the evil designs of Bradford Dillman as they race to Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, here it only serves to add to the melodrama and detract from the effectiveness of the climactic scene in which Jack Godell takes over the control room just before the reactor reaches its full capacity. Lemmon is good, but not good enough to make us forget that, after all, it's only an escape film.

Jack Godell, the archetypal decent American, stands alone against the system, and process and power begin to merge. Godell has the power to get his message out to the public, but only after the timeconsuming process of a network feed. Godell has power over the control room, but only by threatening to initiate the process of flooding the containment area with radioactivity and rendering the reactor useless. His antagonist, the utility board chairman, has the power to counter Godell's control, but only through the process of manually shutting down the reactor. That would acknowledge Godell's demands in fact, if not in deed.

When the board chairman makes the decision to bypass the control room ("Scram the son-of-a-bitch."), another process begins. Black-garbed SWAT troopers in a black van have arrived on the scene and are preparing to reassert the power of the state. Quick cuts go from process to process: the television crews setting up to carry Godell's warning that the plant is not safe; the utility crews manually shutting down the reactor, working from readouts, plans, and blueprints; the SWAT team torching through to the control room door and adjusting plastic explosives on the door lock, their Armalite assault rifles ready on full automatic. But in a final irony, the reactor assumes its own process, beyond the power of anyone to control.

The China Syndrome is not a disaster movie. Southern California is not wiped out by a radioactive cloud, although that would make a great sequel. Imagine Love Story with a couple of million Ali McGraws. The cast is unlikely to get together for China Syndrome II. Since Fonda is the wife of Tom Hayden, Jerry Brown's top solar energy bureaucrat, we probably can't expect to see her in a thriller about a deadly beam



The Warriors: Michael Beck and Terry Michos.

of microwave radiation from a solar orbital satellite cutting a deadly swath from Riverside to San Diego. *The China Syndrome* is, in the final analysis, a surprisingly good film from some promising younger talents, not the political blockbuster the nuke nuts and industry flacks had led us to expect.

The federally funded study purporting to establish the odds as something on the order of one in five billion was recently discredited by yet another federally supported report. How many deaths would there be from radiation poisoning, from cancer? One expert suggests thousands, perhaps millions, given certain weather conditions. Another estimates mere hundreds, which certainly puts the technology within the "acceptable risk" category.

The China Syndrome could even be seen as a left-handed endorsement of the nuclear power industry, since the worst happened and nobody was hurt, if we don't count good old Jack Godell. Too bad he flipped out that way. Kind of incoherent toward the end. Guess the strain will do that to ya. Such a nice guy, too.

But all's well that ends well in the glamorous, exciting field of nuclear power. Disasters? Fergit it. "Almosts" only count in horseshoes.

Richard Weholt

The Warriors

Now that 18 years have elapsed since the sterile depiction of street gangs in *West Side Story*, it was only a matter of time before Hollywood rediscovered the profit in punks.

The Lords of Flatbush, a low-budget gang picture that went practically unnoticed a few years ago, nevertheless boosted the acting careers of three out of four "Lords"—Sylvester Stallone, Henry Winkler, and Perry King. Their later success makes the movie appear considerably more entertaining in retrospect. More recently, in addition

to romanticizing life on the dance floor, Saturday Night Fever hinted at the somewhat less than idyllic existence on the streets. John Travolta as the thin-hipped, macho Tony Manero, "struck a responsive chord with audiences." When any kind of movie behavior is referred to in terms of chord striking in the popular media, we can expect more of the same. Almost a half dozen films are either completed, in production, or in the planning stage that deals with gangs, barrios, or slums.

In *The Warriors* the youth gang subculture serves as a backdrop to the conventional plot of male protagonists caught behind enemy lines. Director Walter Hill could have easily been fashioning yet another version of the cavalry riding through hostile Indian territory. Setting the film in the slums and subways of New York City gives it a freshness and topicality that locales like Monument Valley and *Stage-coach*-style screenplays can no longer provide.

The screenplay for *The Warriors*, coauthored by David Shaber and Hill, is a pasteurized version of Sol Yurick's 1965 novel of the same name. Yurick's book emphasizes the dilemma of gang versus citizenry. Its heroes are unflinchingly portrayed as cold-blooded, sadistic killers, and avid rapists. Shaber and Hill's screenplay limits the conflict to gang versus gang and does not exploit the theme so evident in Yurick's work of violence as a recreational pastime.

The story covers one long and bruising night in the life of the "Warriors," a group of nine modern-day tribesmen from Coney Island. Accompanied by 60,000 members of other youth gangs, all protected from each other by a citywide truce, they attend a mass unification meeting in the Bronx called by Cyrus, the head of the Riffs, the city's most powerful gang. Cyrus is promptly assassinated by the psychotic leader of the nondescript Rogues, the Warriors are mis-



The Warriors: Michael Beck and Deborah Van Valkenburgh.

takenly blamed, and open season is declared on them by practically every j.d. in New York. The movie traces the Warriors' flight from the Bronx, a land as foreign to them as Borneo, to the safety of the Coney Island home turf over 15 miles away.

Hill's direction exhibits a Bressonian preoccupation with the visual image, and like Bresson's films, The Warriors can be described as haunting. Rather than merely creating a flow of images to advance the screenplay pictorially, Hill uses the color, texture, light and shadow within the frame to convey the otherworldly, disorienting appearance of the city at night. The effect is heightened by the constant shifting between murky back streets and park paths to the harsh, sickly green fluorescence of the subway stations. Andrew Laszlo's crisp cinematography complements the director's style perfectly without resorting to the already trite grittiness found, for example, in Martin Scorsese's Taxi Driver.

One drawback of the emphasis on the image in *The Warriors* may be seen in the casting of unknown actors, who were apparently chosen more for their distinctive physical features than for their acting ability. The screenplay allows little opportunity for them to excel, but the infrequent one-on-one exchanges of dialogue are nevertheless the film's weakest moments. Michael Beck as the impassive Warriors's warlord, Swan, and Marcelino Sanchez, a Sal Mineo look-alike playing the neophyte Rembrandt, are the most impressive.

Although the accuracy of the costuming is questionable, the combat scenes are *The Warriors*'s finest sequences. Attacking gang members sport everything from shaved heads and army fatigues to painted faces and baseball uniforms. The ferocity of their assaults increases in direct proportion to the ludicrousness of their attire. The fight scenes are superbly staged and remarkably bloodless. By most movie, and even television, standards, *The Warriors* cannot be

considered an overly violent film. Hill's economical and unobtrusive direction with its finely composed images transforms a weak-kneed script into a hard-hitting movie. Due to the short runs scheduled for *The Warriors*, it probably will not provide the impetus Hill's career needs to put him on a level of critical acceptance comparable to Malick, De Palma, et al. *The Driver*, his previous effort, was devastatingly panned by critics. Hill is a fine director, though, with a recognizable style marked by simplicity and purpose rather than the flashiness found too often in the films of young directors.

The Warriors deserves a larger, more mature audience than it has received in its very limited engagements across the country. Showings of the movie have reportedly incited shootings and stabbings outside theaters. Boulevard Nights, another recently released film (about Chicano gangs in East Los Angeles), was canceled after a threeday run in a San Francisco theater at the request of the city's mayor, following a shooting incident.

The paranoia about gang movies and the audiences they seemingly attract has already provided fodder for newspaper columns and opinion polls. This may be one time when the movie industry is not grateful for the publicity.

The argument that violence, whether on a movie or television screen, breeds violence in viewers is not the issue in determining the proper appraisal of *The Warriors* or similar films. There can be no doubt that we are influenced by all kinds of media messages, and violence is only one of an endless variety of responses. The Hollywood youth gang trend forces us to examine the criteria used in the selection of society's heroes. Protagonists in survival situations are invariably heroes, and the story of the Warriors would have been impossible to tell without their being portrayed in an heroic manner. There would be

no outcry over the film's limited amount of violence if its leading characters represented a different, more socially acceptable, segment of society.

Most of us have probably never come in contact with a bona fide youth gang, but we all think we know hoodlums when we see them. They are the rough-looking teenagers smoking in the back of the bus and feeling up their girlfriends in public. Those who would prefer that this segment of the population not be made into movie heroes should likewise question why these same adolescents, given crew cuts and uniforms, can be portrayed heroically in war films. From the point of view of the screenplay, their actions may not differ at all. Both kinds of movies basically concern themselves with the struggle for survival, the "life-and-death conflicts that make good drama," as one director of a gang film states.

There can be no denying that incidents have occurred following the showing of gang movies, but suppression of these films or the limiting of their exhibition sets a precedent far more damaging than a few isolated acts of violence. It implies that only socially acceptable heroes may inhabit our movie screens and that a distance must always be kept between the content of the film and the sensibilities of the audience.

Contemporary urban life has not been sufficiently examined in movies. In addition to street punks shown in *The Warriors*, there are countless others in our cities whose literal struggle for survival is an everyday affair. Their battle for existence has all the characteristics of the most primitive human behavior, and it takes place in the urban centers of our "advanced" civilization. We need to know more about the undersides of our big cities, and *The Warriors* is a good place to begin.

Laura Sanden

Movie Movie

Recent years have shown a disturbing trend surfacing: the film writers and directors who, it would seem, are most qualified to turn out film comedy hommages turn out, instead, films that are neither funny nor true to their "inspiration."

The comparison of the Hitchcock shower-scene tributes in a previous Cinemonkey brings up one very good example of this phenomenon. Another example is Larry Gelbart's recent "tribute," Movie Movie. Whereas Gelbart's script for Oh God! was no masterpiece, it was, at least, a complete entity, a story waiting to be told. Rather than being story-oriented, or even joke-oriented, Movie Movie spends so much time trying to be a "tribute" that no time or trouble is spent trying to make it funny.

Whether one chooses to call it parody, tribute, hommage or whatever, basing a work on another work or genre means taking on two responsibilities: accuracy as

well as entertainment. Movie Movie fails on both counts. By tackling the unspecific category "'B' Movies of the Depression," the makers of Movie Movie can only deal with the few thematic factors that most of these movies had in common: being shot in black-and-white, for example.

The overwhelming majority of the jokes in the "Dynamite Hands" segment of Movie Movie are intentionally inept metaphors and similes taken from the cheap dialogue of the lesser Hollywood films of the Thirties. Establishing the fact that such dialogue existed in those "B" pictures takes but a minute; Gelbart spends 45 minutes on the subject.

Aside from Ann Reinking's dance routine in "Dynamite Hands" (which I found to be more sensuous than humorous), there is no physical humor to speak of in either of Movie Movie's parodies. How odd, when both the world of fighting and the world of singing and dancing offer so many opportunities for physicality.

The film's creators might argue that Movie Movie's "Dynamite Hands" did, in fact, "concentrate" its aim (which is on boxing epics of the past). Aside from the waste which takes place when wordplay is used almost exclusively to approach a non-verbal setting, the verbal jokes which are used are never about boxing, merely about boxing movies.

By comparison, the Bruce Lee parody "A Fistful of Yen" included in *The Kentucky Fried Movie* has no pretentious "tribute" to which it must address itself. It merely uses Lee's pictures as a starting point from which to develop laughs.

"Fistful of Yen" gets its characters, plot and setting from a specific Lee film, Enter the Dragon. By using this one film as a starting point, the burden of the above elements is taken from the parodist's shoulders. At the same time, this method guarantees that the parody will be accurate in its handling of genre conventions. Movie Movie tries to be all boxing pictures of the Depression, and all movie musicals of that era, and does not remain true to either genre.

By picking one picture to parody, as in *The Kentucky Fried Movie*, the other pictures in the genre are parodied as well. Not permitted in law, "guilt by association" is pivotal in parody or satire.

The limited entertainment offered by Movie Movie is not overshadowed by its accuracy, since accuracy is lacking as well. In the second portion of Movie Movie, "Blatsky's Beauties," the writer and director put themselves in the tenuous position of trying to outdo Busby Berkeley at his own game. A dance scene more outrageous and delightfully mindless than, say, the "banana" sequence from The Gang's All Here is all but unimaginable. The only clear possibility, then, is to point up the outlandishness of such films by using contrast. A supposedly imposing chorus line consisting of halfa-dozen semi-blondes on a feeble set would



Movie Movie: George C. Scott and director Stanley Donen comfort each other.

both get laughs and point directly to the films targeted.

The preceding is just an example, of course. If, however, the exact copy route must be taken, then why is the camera in "Blatsky's Beauties" immobile and in long shot? Where are Berkeley's constantly tracking cameras? The costumes in the "big production number" are in no sense of the word extravagant, as are the costumes in Berkeley production numbers.

Just as the "Dynamite Hands" segment of *Movie Movie* contains no jokes about boxing (substituting jokes told by boxers), "Blansky's Beauties" contains no musical jokes. While the "moon/June" lyrics of Hollywood musical songs are exploited, the film is once again caught in a bind. Though not "authentic" enough to be in the least bit memorable, the music itself takes itself too seriously to allow for the many possibilities for parody waiting to be tapped within any popular music genre.

Whether it is the sly Hitchcockian tribute vs. the forced farce of High Anxiety, or the bright and engaging detective film Peeper vs. the dull and star-studded Cheap Detective, it would seem that a filmgoer interested in good film parody or satire should rely on the efforts of young directors and writers (lampooning films made before they were born) over the attempts at entertainment made by those who grew up on the subjects of their film tributes.

Daniel DePrez

Quintet

A Perfect Couple

One problem with film reviewing is the constant need to make finalizing statements in a field where few things are definitive. For example, the Oscars come every year, no matter what is said about them. This gives criticism the image of futility. Just when one feels the last word on Altman has been said, along comes another one of his films, and then another, and there seems no way to eradicate his presence. Artists who create works with depth and multitudes will never exhaust the artistic potential of criticism. Altman's films parade past like an army, relentless, cruel, and unform, exasperating—one who attempts a sensitive alliance with the cinema, the films numbing any sense of creativity, as if the stasis of the films browbeat the audience into a similar lugubriousness.

Quintet is the most ridiculous and disconcerting film to come from someone considered a "major" filmmaker, whose very name has become synonymous with art, as one discovers while browsing through the rock press ("like Altman, Jackson Browne attempts to . . . " etc.). A schoolboy's script, from a hash of hands, containing such dialogue as, "Yesterday is not today, the film leans on the incomprehensible crutch of a game that exhausts its possibilities for metaphor in a few minutes. There is an incredible amount of gratuitous violence, as if the forces that normally prevented Altman from exploiting violence until his obligatory conclusions, suddenly went haywire, littering the screen with the most infantile expressions of contempt. Such incidents include: two characters calmly talking as Nina Van Pallandt sits dead between them, an arrow through her head; Paul Newman watching his wife get blown up, and later, eaten by dogs; Bibi Andersson getting her throat slit, then dumped in a fire. The film's pace is agonizingly slow, and photographed irritatingly with blurred edges, and the unironed acting styles of 15 different schools also contributes to making this one of the most ill-conceived films of all time.

Just when the bad taste of *Quintet* was out of the mouth, *A Perfect Couple* assails us. Though less cynical than previous films,



Quintet: Paul Newman being directed by Robert Altman.

that distinctive Altman contempt crops up occasionally in its spoiled child, scattergun fashion. The script, written by Altman and Allan Nicholls, is stronger, marred perhaps by fewer hands. The extended family of Paul Dooley and the work family of Marta Heflin are well contrasted, but really, this is sit-com material. The Shelley Duvall-esque Heflin fits into her family as ill-well as Dooley his, and there are some nice touches with the awkwardness between them. Nicholls as the other date from Great Expectations, the computer dating service, is very funny, as is the doctor who stitches Dooley's head later ("When you see as much pain as I do, it makes you want to kill it."), but these are balanced by the bad jokes, the silly, obvious sight gags Altman can't resist. One gets the impression that Altman would rather produce records than direct films, what with all the musical interruptions in this and prior films. There are some glaring holes in the structure, situations are resolved without apparent reason, and the excuse of European-influenced lacunas can no longer be used. Though Couple is the most pleasant of Altman's recent films, it still illustrates how far he has been diverted from the path of McCabe, Images, and Three Women. Ken Alakine

Go Tell The Spartans

If you venture into the more remote corners of some of the local crackerboxes, you might catch a brief glimpse of a good little film called *Go Tell the Spartans* before it is consigned to oblivion or television (much the same thing, actually). It has been released about as enthusiastically as a virus: poorly promoted and booked into theaters where it will receive as little notice as possible. The script bounced around Hollywood for years before it was filmed and now that it's made, nobody seems to know about it.

Too bad. Though not what anyone would call a masterpiece, it is a modest, but effective, look at U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war, using a single incident to capture the whole sorry mess in miniature. The title (a good one for the film, a bad one for box offices) is from the Greek poet Simonides, referencing to the 300 Spartans who died at Thermopolae in 480 B.C.: "Go tell the Spartans, thou that passeth by, that here, obedient to their laws, we lie." A rough translation of it appears in French at the entrance to a small cemetery in the abandoned village of Muc Wa, where a group of Americans have been sent (as 'advisors," to use the favorite excuse for our presence at the time, 1964), along with a number of South Vietnamese, against the better judgment of local base commander Major Asa Barker (Burt Lancaster). The top brass have the idea Muc Wa is of strategic importance, so Barker sends what he can, a ragtag outfit made of new, raw American arrivals (plus one experienced second lieutenant) along with the locals to occupy the outpost, which is promptly surrounded by Viet Cong. The brass decide the place has no real strategic importance after all and order an American evacuation-much too

The title, and the passage inspiring it, acquire some weighty irony in the course of the story and a bit of irony is provided by the film itself, which benefits from the shortcomings of its director, Ted Postwhose career in films has been chiefly a series of lows-Hang 'em High, Magnum Force, Whiffs, the worst of the Apes series, Beneath the Planet... and more. Other than a taste for brutality, Post (his dumb, seedy Good Guys Wear Black is, or was, playing in some of the same places as Spartans) never exhibited more than a certain technical competence, offering almost nothing in the way of imagination, character interest, thought, or style (beyond heavy-handedness).

He was, however, a good choice for this project. The script by Wendell Mayes (who wrote one of Hollywood's best WWII movies, The Enemy Below, in '57) is sharp, honest, and observant of the moral confusion that characterized this conflict. The points it makes are made in the storytelling, without soapboxing or windy philosophizing. A more "important" director, one more original or thoughtful, might have tried to add embellishments, impose an ideology or "make a statement"; quite possibly ruining the film in the process. Post isn't really up to that sort of thing and it's all to the good here. His style is direct, determinedly unheroic; the sun-bleached, almost drab visuals (flamboyance also being impractical due to an obviously low budget) emphasizing the simplicity of the story as well as the shoddiness of the Muc Wa incident and what it represents.

There is a sad but unsentimental compassion for the characters, a typical (unavoidable, actually) cross-section company without some of the usual cliches. In the center is Lancaster, bringing a veteran actor's solid authority to the veteran soldier, an old WWII and Korea hand who is too good a soldier to rebel or to see this war as anything more than "a sucker's tour." The rest of the cast, most fairly new recruits themselves, are fine. The absurd little tragedy of Muc Wa ends with a single title over the final shot, reminding us of the year; a strong finish for an unpretentious, and finally, powerful movie.

Pat Holmes

Richard Pryor

Richard Pryor—In Concert is a unique cinematic experience because there are so few films that present a complete, uncut performance of a stand-up comedian. The only other example of this kind of film that comes to mind is the Lenny Bruce Performance Film.

Not only is Richard Pryor—In Concert good for pure entertainment value, it is also valuable as a visual text from which the interested viewer can study Richard Pryor's comic technique. Watching this film, Pryor's physical control in performance can be fully appreciated, impossible while listening to his record albums.

Pryor usually begins a story by setting the scene slowly and quietly, as in the bit about the outdoors. He looks around the stage and out to the audience, saying nothing, then begins to talk of quiet nature sounds, imitating the noise of walking over dried leaves. The scene is set. He talks of pissing in the woods, which leads into the snake material, then into the hunting material. Pryor starts slowly and builds to the bigger laughs to encourage the audience to follow him from one routine to another, to keep audience and performer in pace with each other. After talking about fucking, how dogs get hooked up and what

an advantage it would be for women being raped, he then segues to the next bit; he feels his chest and says he felt a slight pain. Since most people in the audience were aware of his recent heart attack, Pryor could then move into his routine about his coronary. (Also note that Pryor later picks up a cue from someone in the audience about Mexicans and uses it as a segue into his bit on Chinese people.)

Pryor takes command of his performing space. He has the ability to expand or concentrate audience attention, evident in his judicious choice in sectioning off areas of the stage, playing within a specified area, or using the entire space. His choices are made according to the demands of the routine. When he does the jogging bit, he uses the whole stage by running in large circles. When he portrays two inept deer hunters, he creates a log in front of the hunters at center stage over which they look at a deer located somewhere in the audience. In this way he keeps the attention centered on the characters rather than the deer.

Pryor creates imaginary props for his characters out of the air or out of solid objects near him. Pryor's use of the microphone stand as a tree which he is uprooting is hilarious. His later transformation of his microphone into a bottle of ointment used by the grandmother on the grandson's backside is particularly good in a way that lends credence to his imaginary world; he is not the comedian on stage so much as the character he is portraying.

Pryor tends to personify non-existent things. The pain that talks antagonistically to the jogger, the legs gone rubbery from a boxing punch that talks to the brain, or the ruthless heart talking to the suffering self are all good examples. Sensibility versus Pride is usually the comic point of

debate between personas.

Pryor's genius in creating comic characters is in his disciplined actor's approach to them. He becomes the character physically experiencing firsthand the truths he wants to convey. When Pryor becomes the young child trying to lie about breaking a lamp, he establishes the height and the intensity of the child by maintaining eye contact with an imaginary adult. Coupled with Pryor's interpretation of the phrasing and content of the child's speech, the comic impact is particularly good. Especially note Pryor's physical control when he is imitating a startled deer drinking water. The deer's head immediately shoots up as a noise is made. Pryor moves only his eyes to convey the intense listening of the deer. He then slowly rotates at the waist to show the deer bending at the base of the neck in order to see all around. It is amazing that he can convey these small details to an auditorium of people. Richard Pryor is perhaps the greatest comedian in the relatively short history of stand-up comedy. Richard Pryor -In Concert has captured for us his incredible talent. Carl Bennett

Eraserhead

With his film Eraserhead, David Lynch has created what can only be called a surrealistic masterpiece. Uncompromising in style, this black-and-white film is not merely nightmarish: it is a nightmare captured on celluloid. The audience is plunged into a dark, menacing, claustrophobic environment of decay, gloom and nausea with more intensity than anything surrealist cinema or film-noir has yet offered. The eerie symbolism of images Lynch has dredged up from the subconscious is far more disorienting than Polanski's Repulsion or The Tenant, Jodorowski's El Topo, or Malle's Black Moon. Comic relief is minimal and as the heavy depression and the sense of impending doom become more nearly intolerable for the protagonist/victim and the audience, any nervous laughter or guffaws which have been evoked abruptly cease, making Eraserhead a far cry from those sparkling gems by the Grand Master of Surrealist Cinema, Luis Buñuel.

It is difficult to maintain intellectual distance from the film's haunting dream mythology. Its potency is such that one soon feels he is journeying deep within his very own nightmare. Henry, the protagonist/victim, is a printer "on vacation" who lives in a dingy apartment house (at times reminiscent of scenes in Psycho) located in an industrial wasteland. His apartment seems to be rife with mold, moss, fungus, and grass, along with several piles of soil from broken flower pots and the remnants of dead houseplants (probably he feels too exhausted and depressed to clean up the mess). The flickering lights in the apartment only reveal deeper shadows. The grimy windows are steamed up and the steam radiators hiss and clank. Outside are the noises of trains and storms. Henry's relief from this cacaphony is a record of amusement-park-ride calliope music. He has one special, favorite part of the record which he seeks out each time he plays it. Also, he is given to daydreaming on his rickety bed (a dream within a dream, like The Saragossa Manuscript) about a pasty white, angelic woman in a white dress who might possibly be his own salvation from the frustrating predicament his life has become. She is "pure," and visions of her come only when Henry stares at the radiator heater; the hissing sound it makes reminds him of the way a theater or music hall audience sounds before curtain-time. The radiator pipes become curtains which part and his Angel, with her cute, upturned nose and grotesquely puffy cheeks, dances on a steamy, tiled stage (just like the tiled floor under the radiator) and sings a lullabye to him (accompanied by calliope music) about how fine things are "in Heaven."

The three other women in Henry's life are unsettling in varying degrees and he feels ill at ease around them. The dark-

haired, demonic sexpot who lives across the black hall is a "man-eater." At one point Henry sleeps with her—or dreams that he sleeps with her and is pulled down into a pool of muck which appears in the center of his bed, the primoridal ooze of sexual lust (as he is absorbed into her libido) or the swamp of sinful sensuality. Henry's girlfriend Mary is nervous and shy, perhaps an epileptic, or the carrier of potential gross deformities in her genetic code. When Henry is invited over to her parents' house for dinner, the severe mother accuses him of impregnating her daughter. In this stressful situation, he develops a nose-bleed. Nonetheless, he meekly accepts the responsibility for the thing at the hospital ("Mother, they're not even sure it is a baby!") which he has supposedly fathered. Subsequently, Mary and the little monstrosity (which resembles a foetal lamb with no limbs and a torso wrapped in bandages) move in with him. It moans, coughs, and gurgles incessantly, making sleep impossible for the young couple. Eventually, in the middle of a storm, Mary goes back tearfully to her parents' house (also located in the blighted zone) to get some sleep, and leaves Henry to cope with their "baby," which suddenly becomes sick without benefit of maternal care. Henry rigs up a vaporizer, but its condition only worsens and hideous sores, perhaps measles, cover its face and neck. Finally, out of curiosity or desperation, Henry cuts open the bandages on the torso with scissors...and the audience receives another dose of shocks.

Henry is, of course, a freakish character. A nightmarish environment could only spawn a freak. He finds mechanical devices potentially threatening and communication with his fellow denizens difficult. He moves like a zombie through his bizarre, frustrating encounters, wearing poorly fitting clothes, white socks, a pocket-protector pencil and pen pouch, a worried expression and a "fright-wig" of frizzy hair reminiscent of a pencil eraser. Indeed, the fright-wig hair style is appropriate for someone as paranoid as Henry. In another of the dreams within the dream, Henry imagines himself beheaded and (having fallen into a mudpuddle in an alley) found by a boy who takes it to a factory in the blighted zone where erasers are put on pencils. Naturally, Henry's head provides A-1 eraser material, a metaphor for existential numbness and the loss of memory and creativity, as if a sort of petrification process had occurred and replaced the precious substance of intelligence in the honeycomb of the mind (or brain) with residual industrial muck. Corrosive modern society tends to transform people into objects, stripping away or leaching out the essential subtleties of being "human."

With the same perfectly illogical logic of dreams, Henry discovers more of the wriggling, ectoplasmic creatures like his "child" (but at a much less developed, macro-spermatozoan stage) coming out of



Eraserhead: John Nance as Henry Shaver.

Mary's womb while she sleeps in his bed. Horrified, he pulls them out like slimy, squeaky snakes and throws them violently onto the floor and against the walls of the apartment. In the next vision of his singing guardian Angel, she steps on and squashes these squriming, foetal forms (while wearing a sickly smile) as they fall around her onto the stage, in an attempt to eradicate this gross impurity. But when Henry again sees the mysterious sexpot, and she has rejected him (in Mary's absence) by bringing a man home to her apartment, the audience sees Henry's feeling of loss and sexual inadequacy manifested by the head of the freak baby rising out of his collar in place of his own head. (At this point, the audience may wonder if he actually is-or fears he is—a fully grown version of one of these creatures.) Henry belongs to a long tradition of out-of-tune "losers" who are eventually destroyed or engulfed by their hostile surroundings, or who must exit via suicide.

The opening sequence of the film shows a deformed attendant with a hideously scarred or eroded face pulling levers which might control the machinery of an amusement park ride, a Kafka-esque carnival of absurdity. He seems to be inside the bowels or womb of Hell, or the bowels of Henry's apartment, or a small, obscure, crumbling eraser-like planet in a dying galaxy (the credits list the actor in this part as the "man in the planet"). Whatever device or process he activates seems to cause a possibly animate thing (like the ectoplasmic creatures which occur later) to jettison and to plunge through a void, into a pool (or Earth?) and then gradually slide through what may be a hair-rimmed aperture, entering a painfully intense whiteness (the trauma of birth?). Suddenly Henry appears, walking through his symbolic, desolate landscape in bright daylight. The possibilities are fascinating and multiply as the film progresses. Henry's deformed offspring might be considered a metaphor

for what pollution, radiation and miracle drugs may be doing to our environment and bodies; or a projection of an "ineffectual" person's fears that he or she could not produce normal, healthy progeny. Chemical additives, or an extreme sense of guilt over carnivorous activities, may be responsible for a man-made roast chicken (the size of a fist) which wiggles and spews blood when Henry tries to carve it. Other symbols in the film are more subtle and mysterious, such as the tiny seed or piece of dried, exotic (alien?) food or medicinal root which someone has left in his mailbox in the stark lobby. Who can tell with a character who keeps a bowl of water in the same bureau drawer with clothing and a torn-in-half photo of his girlfriend?

Like most of the best works of art, Eraserhead is open to numerous interpretations because it is not merely a randomly juxtaposed collection of images. One might say that David Lynch was being too "selfindulgent" by making this sort of underground "personal film"; actually he has proven that the vagaries and obscure connections of the shadowy subconscious mind can be accurately and even brilliantly transmuted into an artform to which anyone interested in dreams can relate. If nothing else, those daring thrill-seekers brave enough to view Eraserhead from beginning to end can enrich their own nightmares with deeply disturbing grotesquerie of the finest quality. Russ Island

Ultra Vixens

It is impossible to mistake Russ Meyer's style for that of anybody else's: it is swift, funny, intentionally cartoon-like, and verges on the brilliant. It is a style employed in the service of sex comedies, the true sophistication of which many may find it hard to acknowledge. *Ultravixens* is not his best film; it does not have the suspenseful

plot turns and brilliant satirical punch of Supervixens. The "rural Fellini" (as he has dubbed himself in his own clever trailers) is over-rural. Stuart Lancaster's deadpan delivery of the comical narration, leaning on mailboxes, pulling up in his truck, drilling holes in walls, puts forever in its place with its finely tuned satire, the "warm humanism" of Our Town's stage manager. Meyer leaves no one unoffended in this tale of Lamar Shedd, whose anal fixation drives his wife to extra-marital affairs. "Kitten" Natividad, as with all the women Meyer comes up with, is a surprisingly adept comic, supported, of course, by Meyer's frantic cutting. In fact, if I may dare to criticize the critic-proof Russ Meyer, I would say his style is too much; the frenzy of his images allows the viewer no respite, so that by the film's end he is weary, a weariness felt as boredom. Yet I can see how, given the satiric nature of the film, there is no place to insert a little quiet reality with which to give an audience a rest. I recommend the film to every student for the fluidity of its editing and the professionalism of its photography, not to mention the business level of showing what can be done on a low budget if you're enough of a perfectionist. But the content seems slight compared to Meyer's previously perfect exercises; again, I'm thinking of Supervixens, as well as Beyond the Valley of the Dolls and Faster, Pussycat...Kill, Kill! In Meyer's films, the rocky desert becomes a plane on which passion and violence are played out to comedic climaxes, and the invisible mattress becomes a moral teasing of the sexually repressed. Let us have more Jake Uhl Russ Meyer retrospectives.

INTERVIEW WITH RUSS MEYER

The interview took place of 25 April, 1979, in the Benson Hotel in Portland, Oregon. The interviewers were Steve Fugett, Pat Holmes, and Douglas Holm.

PH: I was wondering if working on the industrial films and the newsreels helped you in your style, since the whole purpose of that style is to make a point as briefly as possible.

MEYER: In newsreel you had no control over the end result; military newsreels became commercial newsreels because there weren't enough news cameramen. There were all these amateur photographers whose work was automatically good if there was that extra element of courage—but you had no control over the editing. I think it was the best experience of my life.

PH: Some of your experience seems to have carried over, in that some of your shots look like hazardous duty.

MEYER: Yeah, I like things to be a little hard. I like a location where you

have to climb every day, manhandle the equipment. That's what happened with Supervixens. We had to climb up that mountain every day. That mountain would bite at you. You had these terrible volcanic rocks, and you ended up cut and bruised, but it worked, you know, all the chemistry worked. I like anything that's difficult, that's physical.

But you make a good point about the industrial films. For example, to show how to drill an oil well, a lot of cuts are necessary. There's a guy up there who has the toughest job in the world. He's called the belly-buster, and they've not found a machine to do his job. But to show him you have to use a lot of inserts: up there with him, his face, the hands and the pipe, guys down below with their tremendous wrenches, the engine and the gauges and the brake; you have to have all these inserts to make it dramatically interesting. We had a good instructor in the army, who used to do Our Gang comedies for the Hal Roach studio, Arthur Lloyd. He would always hold up five fingers to us and say, "If you get long shot, medium shot, close shot, insert, and re-establish action, you'll always be able to cut that scene." We'd go out and always do that. We burned up so much film! A tank coming down the road-we'd always go up and say, "Could you back up the tank?" But I had a great time, got a lot of good scenes; a couple of them were used in the film Patton. Today, while shooting a film, I'm still using the five fingers. "Could you fall down again, my dear?"

PH: Do you end up shooting more film than you use?

MEYER: Oh yeah, it's about fifteen-to-one. The biggest item on my budget is item 11 on the general form: laboratory. That includes all raw stock, processing, and dailies. In low-budget films, certainly in my films, that represents, say, 80,000 of a \$200,000 budget. So you see, there's not much left for anything else.

DH: What did you think of Hardcore?

MEYER: I disliked it. It's why I feel so uptight about the rating board now—I was at one time a champion of the whole thing. Hollywood, the majors, the people who work in major films, who work in television, are so contemptuous of, particularly the independents, but especially those who work in hardcore films, and here they go right out and take the very thing they hold in such great contempt, and try to make a lot of money with it, and stand there in a pontifical way and say, "Isn't this evil?" That ending was ludicrous as hell. I just didn't like what they did, that's all.

DH: Do you have many friends in the Hollywood set?

MEYER: No. I did when I was at Fox. It was a nice experience. I went there—I was asked to go, and given complete control...um, a little harassment from production because they felt the script would make a three-hour movie. Ebert and I did tremendous gobs of scene description. They were always timing it and saying, "This film is two hours and thirty minutes!" I have a great collection of memos from Zanuck. He was always writing memos: "Good show. I saw your car in the parking lot on Sunday and it gave me a good feeling."

DH: How are your films given to the exhibitors?

MEYER: I have sub-distributors who sell it, you know, like the majors, on the basis of whatever we can get.

DH: You supply your own ad campaign, with different ads varying with what can be put in newspapers?

MEYER: Yeah, we put together a pretty good press kit.

SF: A lot more efficient than most of the majors.

PH: Have you ever made a film that lost money?

MEYER: No, never. Finally the last one, Blacksnake, Sweet Suzy, Duchess of Doom—whatever you want to name it, we gave it a lot of titles—got in over the winning mark. It sold to a lot of countries ... Indonesia, Turkey, Lebanon, countries where if you wanted to start a little revolt it might serve as a training film.

I have to do big tits and square jaws, or they're not going to come to the film, that's all. If the audience expects something and doesn't see it, they aren't going to come back.

PH: Do your films tend to each one make more money?

MEYER: No. There are four films in the 100 top-grossing films of all time, reported yearly in Variety (Cherry, Harry, and Raquel, Vixen, Supervixens and Beyond the Valley of the Dolls), all of them without having a name star. I think pound for pound and foot for foot they are among the most successful films made. But still, I find now it behooves me to make films as reasonably as I can. The days of Vixen are gone. Everything's been shown. The cost of prints, advertising, even production, has doubled. I think it kind of speaks the death knell for the independent. He's faced with this right now. The majors are buying up product left and right.

DH: Are your films against women?

MEYER: I really think a film of this nature

is really pro-female, in the sense that they very definitely put a woman in control; the men are all their willing tools, klutzes. Women are the ones after their own physical pleasure. It's just because the women are so outrageously abundant. My thing about showing screwing is to show it in such a put-on way, that, for the distaff audience, it takes away a lot of the curse of showing it.

SF: Tell me about your experience with the Sex Pistols.

MEYER: I was under contract to make a film with them. Ebert and I did a script. We did eight versions. The thing was aborted after three days of production. It was a traumatic experience, in the sense that you start a film and work that arduously and it doesn't come to any fulfillment. It was a parody on an aging Mick Jagger, and we had a Colonel Parker kind of manager.

SF: Was there any concert footage?

MEYER: We had a set-up thing at the end in which Johnny Rotten tries to emulate Mick Jagger and he gets shot by a 7-year-old with a magnum for his efforts. We shot for three days in Wales in supposedly the Queen's game reserve, with David Prowse.

SF: When I first heard about it I thought it was the perfect union—Meyer and the Sex Pistols.

MEYER: It wasn't all love and kisses. Rotten and Vicious were difficult guys. Jones was a bright, intelligent guy who knew the film would do a great deal for them. Rotten was always caught up in his own particular drama. But I had him, I think, in pretty good shape. The film finance board wanted to know who would be the Clyde Beatty here, who will be the lion tamer for the Pistols, because they had a notorious reputation, which was earned. And I felt certain we could handle it. We were going to shoot outside London in Bray Studios, and they would be in trailers and I would stay with them, under my control, nobody leave, no pubs, no beer, because, the kind of guys they were, they would go out and the Teds would break their bodies and all of a sudden you'd be out of it. That was the kind of planning you need, way on and above a regular picture. It would have been a nervous experience. And the other two had no control over them, and Vicious, I'm sure, was shooting all the time.

PH: Where do you find your actresses?

MEYER: One girl will recommend another.

All of the girls are strippers. I'm more comfortable in that area. First of all, I like strippers; you don't have to reduce any resistance to taking their clothes off;

they are, in a sense, actresses. I don't go around looking. One girl says, "If you think I've got great tits..." You don't have to go through any bullshit. They want to be in the film because they can play now in Terre Haute as "Star-Russ Meyer's Supervixens."

PH: How did the use of the Greek chorus come about?

MEYER: My strongest influence as a filmmaker was, after the war, doing industrial films for some ten years. And in industrial films there are always narrators, a guy comes out on a mailbox saying, "I want to tell you about our annuity plan." I like putting corny bullshit with the sex stuff. I like the whole industrial approach to making films.

DH: In the Roger Ebert article in Film Comment....

MEYER: Somehow he got some wrong information about the film [Cherry, Harry, and Raquel] being destroyed in the lab. That's not true, and he realizes it now. The leading lady left in the middle of the film. She couldn't handle Panamint Springs; it had no phone and no cocktail lounge. And it was good, it was good for the film. You have to reach for other things, and that's where Ushi Digard came in. And Cherry remains my most successful film in cable television, because you can come in on it at any time.

Japanese Film Directors, Audie Bock, Kodansha International Ltd., \$14.95, 370 pages.

Audie Bock's long-awaited, beautiful and brilliant book not only reminds the reader that the construction of fine volumes is an art, but finally supplies for the first time in English the only extensive filmography for many of the directors. The book's contents include: four poster reproductions on the end papers, including Yojimbo and Hanare Goze Orin; a succinct, actorish foreword by Tatsuya Nakadai; the obligatory Donald Ritchi preface, which quickly sums up the current state of Japanese film production; discussions of ten directors, divided into three sections, "the early masters," including Kenji Mizoguchi, Yasujiro Ozu, and Mikio Naruse, "the postwar humanists," including Akira Kurosawa, Keisuke Kinoshita, Kon Ichikawa, and Masaki Kobayashi, and "the new wave," including Shohei Inamura, Nagisa Oshima, and Masahiro Shinoda; copious illustrations; a cursory bibliography; a sturdy

index. Each director gets an essay describing his life, career, themes, and technique, followed by a filmography that tells not only all the essential cast and credits, but also supplies a quick plot summary, and a note telling where the film is available (or where the negative is, or if the film is lost). These days a critic must prove to be a scholar on several directors and on several aspects of the cinema, and Bock meets all requirements. I've been waiting years for a complete Mizoguchi filmography, but her revisionist evaluation puts him in a new perspective for me. Bock had access to interviews (as well as friendship) with most of the still-living directors. What with interviews with the men themselves, as well as with his friends and peers, and Bock's astute analysis, we have a living, moving record of each director's personality. I will leave evaluation of Bock's ideas to more knowledgeable writers; nevertheless, this book deserves ownership by students of Japanese film, if not all film students, as an essential reference and as inspiration.

Gabriel Conroy

The Movie Brats, Michael Pye and Lynda Myles, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, paper, \$5.95, 273 pages.

This book by two British critics associated with the Edinburgh Film Festival (Myles) and the Sunday Times (Pye) attempts to trace the development of the "new Hollywood" as it manifests itself in six directors: Coppola, Lucas, De Palma, Milius, Scorsese, and Spielberg. They begin with an interesting and valuable analysis of Hollywood's decline after the peak year of 1946, a decline they attribute to the growth of suburbia rather than the rise of television, of which there weren't very many until the late fifties. The six directors are each given a short chapter outlining their careers and evaluating their output, and, being both leftist and British, they like very little of it, sometimes half-heartedly, but always determinedly, as if their friends would reject them if they ever slipped up and actually admitted liking a film even remotely tinged with "sexism" and the "values" of the "bourgeoisie." They release a peculiar amount of bile over Taxi Driver (pages 209-213), calling it essentially a nightmare, Scorsese's pussy/Magnum monologue described as "probably the ugliest single scene of misogyny that has been filmed," also calling the film "an ugly warning," a "vicious tract," "Bickle is condoned in his lawless brutality." Though Schrader blames "the immaturity and youngness of our country," the authors chastise him for not blaming Bickle himself for Bickle's existence. Alice, with her "monstrous" son, is cricitized because "the film's women are subordinated to the men" (page 206), yet the film ultimately fails because of "Scorsese's compromises with Burstyn" (page 207). There is actually quite a bit of speculation as to why this or that film failed (they all fail), though none of the men is attacked personally, except Milius (page 176), who is ridiculed for being a war enthusiast when in reality he received a 4-F exemption from the draft.

With Lucas the criticism reaches a certain sublime level: "The love of neighborhood and the profound sexism...suggest the link with suburban values that [American Graffiti's] context would lead us to expect" (page 123). Lucas's statement that if one really wants to make films, one makes them (page 119) is the "facile attitude" that explains the failure of THX-1138. "If he had not been the white, middle-class son of a California businessman," he would have more sympathy for the less privileged, and "this self-confident ethic allows him to paint only a shallow, tepid picture of his future society." THX-1138 "is committed... to...the idea that the constant supply of material goods makes class irrelevant, that will is enough for success." Film criticism that cannot rely on aesthetic reasons for its dismissal of a film is poor criticism; here the inferred politics of the director are imposed on the film without using actual aesthetic

elements as evidence or support.

The authors do like De Palma; he hates Hollywood as much as they do. But they cannot resist pointing out his slow and inevitable entrapment in the studio system as it exists today. Milius gets the shortest chapter because his politics are as far from theirs as it is possible to be-he is an animal they do not understand-while Coppola gets the longest by virtue of his position of "Godfather" to the others. Spielberg uses his technology to rhapsodize suburbia and he makes "every mystery" of CE3K "over-explicit" (page 243). The UFO film is seen as a soothing response to white people troubled by the disruptions in their daily efforts to ignore the woes caused by the Nixon spectacle and by the everexpanding Third World. I remember when white, liberal guilt used to be funny, as parodied by Lenny Bruce. Psychoanalysis, not a film critic's speculations, would explain the hostility these two British critics feel toward the American middle class, characterized by an unhealthy self-loathing and the elevation of Third World figures in opposition against the "uptight" and hopelessly sexist civilization that has created the traditions of theology and the arts. Suffice it to say that the opening financial history is useful, the six director chapters have some interesting interview quotes, but that their criticism offers no new information N.O. Grace and no fresh approaches.

Alain Resnais, James Monaco, Oxford, paper, \$5.95, 234 pages.

James Monaco's small book on Resnais has a photograph of the director by Maureen Lambray on the cover (the selection of which is explained by Monaco in the text), a chapter-by-chapter discussion of each film, numerous frame enlargements, a chapter devoted to Resnais's unrealized projects (Harry Dickson, the Richard Seaver/De Sade project, the Stan Lee film "The Monster Maker"), a useful chart describing the chronology of Je t'aime, je t'aime, and quotes from an interview with the director himself. Monaco's thesis is that Resnais's image as a severe intellectual and creator of inaccessible films is, of course, all wrong-Resnais's films get more accessible as they come out. He is sensitive to the nuances of Resnais's films and to the ups and downs of his career. His analysis may not have the "rigor" of some of Resnais's previous critics, but Monaco fulfills his aim: he proves the accessibility of Alain Resnais.

I find the discussion of the middle films the best, and I think this is because the later chapters rely on interviews rather than close readings of the films themselves. Monaco's prose (which has improved over the years—he used to be a little repetitious) is direct and conversational, and he creates in the reader what every critic dreams of creating: the overwhelming itch to see the films he discusses. Alain Resnais is a book I foresee myself returning to many times.

Gabriel Conroy

Of Continuing Interest

A Biographical Dictionary of Film, David Thomson, Morrow, 1976, \$7.95, paper, 629 pages.

The cinema attracts completists. As in other fannish pursuits there is the uncontrollable impulse to travel up every eddy of information, turn over every bit of trivia. Combine this with the film fan's urge to hold forth his views, and we end up with such works as Sarris's *American Film*, Sadoul's dictionaries, and in 1975 Thomson's tome. Since its first appearance this book has slowly acquired a well-deserved following, eliciting such praise as "indispensible" from James Monaco.

While in the dictionary format, Thomson allows himself flights of digression, comparison, analysis, and social criticism. It all fits the format well. International in orientation, he discusses actors, actresses, directors, and producers, but not underground films ("by definition, contrary to the spirit of cinema" [page viii]), nor animation ("in most hands, a laborious occupation, veering toward vulgarity or pretentiousness"). In a beautiful introduction that is filled with quotable insights, he makes no apologies for his personal, eccentric approach, for dictionaries are "compiled by eccentrics, humorists and obsessives who sometimes live in the world as a pretext for researching and refining the realm of words" (vii). Thomson's range and strength are amazing. He can volley from a brilliant and stunning essay on Bresson (page 62) to another on Astaire, one that virtually defines the art of screen acting (page 14), amidst a catalogue of Astairian

essences: "He is the man about town, empty of personality, opinion and warmth, but a man who carries himself matchlessly. There is something of the eighteenth-century dandy in the preference for taking nothing seriously, save for the articulation of his superb movement...the inane playboy figures he embodies, men who exist only to walk sweetly across lounges, to preserve rigorous trouser creases and that high, carefree tone of voice" (page 15). (Kelly, on the other hand, seems "cold and aggressive .. too often. Kelly's teeth glare out at us" [page 283].) We learn that Hitchcock lent Leo McCarey outtakes of Robert Walker in Strangers on a Train for the end of My Son John (page 593), which allows him to make a telling a beautiful point, and that Jorn Donner married Harriet Andersson (page 143). He has a knack for encapsulating an actor: Yves Montand has a "spirit of black coffee worldliness" (page 392); Mastroianni's eyes shine with "melancholy and postcoital disenchantment" (page 367).

For the record, Thomson hates Fellini, admires Dreyer, reveres Mizoguchi, finds Altman overrated, worships Hawks, is impatient with Ford, vascillates on Hitchcock, loves Lang, Ozu and Renoir, and sees great potential in many. His opinions may shock, but he is opinionated so that the reader's views can take shape when confronted with Thomson's. His book is a necessity for anyone who believes that enough can never be written on the cinema; there is always room for more thoughts like Thomson's.

Gabriel Conroy

Music

"DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN: AN OPERA OUT ON THE TURNPIKE"

Daniel DePrez

Because of the stature Bruce Springsteen has attained among fellow musicians, critics, other performing artists, and fans of rock in general, he must be considered a major force in rock music at the moment. A schoolmate of Springsteen's, Robin Keats, is now a writer in Hollywood and has approached the singer/songwriter with the idea of putting together a film based upon characters and settings found in songs on the Darkness on the Edge of Town album. Springsteen is reportedly interested in the project (according to the "Coming Attractions" column in the March 1979 Playboy) and would play the lead in the film.

Keats has described his concept as a Saturday Night Fever with drag racing instead of disco dancing. This variation, regardless of its inspiration, makes sense. As popular as disco may be, there are areas (demographic and geographic) where youth avoids disco like the plague. The acceptance

of the Corman/Ramones film *Rock-'n-Roll High School* will help determine the demand for a non-disco rock-based movie.

Springsteen is an apt choice for both story material and for rock-performer-turned-actor. With the nature of his story-songs, the absence of an opening act in his live show, and with an intermission midway through, Springsteen's recent concerts have had more of the dynamics of a play than those of the average rock concert. It is the singer's theatric sense, perhaps, that draws other performers to him. Scorcese and De Niro are said to be big Springsteen fans, and comedian Richard Belzer bases the pacing of his nightclub act on that of Springsteen's live show.

In live performance, Springsteen will take his already story-oriented material and expand its theatric potential. During his lengthy live version of "Rosalita," for instance, Springsteen would cut several times the song completely, the band shifting to a vamp behind the singer. The first time it was so that the singer could go into a monologue about how he lost the girl, Rosalita, and vows to find her. The band jumps back in with another verse and chorus, then back into a vamp as Springsteen hops into the audience with his mike, now looking for Rosie.

The audience on its feet, the singer stalks down the center aisle, then disappearing from view. Even with the house lights up, it is impossible to see Bruce. Then the singer's head pokes up above the others in the crowd. He has squeezed up a row, ten seats in, and is standing on someone's chair, hand to forehead (lookout-style), determined to spot Rosie. No luck. He goes back to the center aisle and repeats the process. Although unsuccessful, we are behind Springsteen 100 percent at this point; we'd give him Rosalita if we could.

Before going back onstage, Bruce has the band slip smoothly from their vamp back into the song. Singing as he strolls back toward the proscenium, he pauses at the front row and sings a line about getting a kiss for luck to a girl on the aisle seat. Pointing to his cheek, she kisses him—right on the beat—and he continues with the song.

A person's acting ability should not be judged on the basis of a rock concert solely, where musical pyrotechnics can override any weaknesses a performer may have in terms of relating to an audience. In the aforementioned monologue and others like it, however, Bruce Springsteen in concert can move and affect an audience by merely speaking lines. In performance, he is an actor as well as a singer/guitarist. Being able to use that acting ability in front of a camera is a reasonable assumption to make about the man.

Part of Springsteen's strength lies in his dual appeal (or at least in his creation of a persona with a dual appeal). Springsteen/the hero of *DOTEOT* is the darling of the intellectuals because of his working-class intensity and openness: he knows instinc-

tively what they know intellectually. The others in the working class appreciate the fact that the Springsteen character has risen above his lot, like Rocky, while

remaining one of them.

DOTEOT is not a "concept album" in that it does not detail one linear story in sequence, but is, instead, a series of vignettes featuring the same setting and main characters. There is no indication as to the chronological order of these vignettes, except that both "Racing in the Streets" and the title tune seem to finalize a relationship (and both contain the only mentions of the singer's platonic racing partner, Sonny).

The other songs on the album detail the drudgery of the factory work that the singer seems to have inherited. This theme of inheritance is echoed in "Adam Raised a Cain," "Something in the Night," and "Badlands"; the idea is that being born into a certain environment seals one's fate. The other songs tell stories of efforts to lash out in some way at this inequity, even if the satisfaction is merely temporary. As the singer says in "Prove It All Night," "Girl, you want it, you take it, you pay the price."

In a sense, the album is an extension of Springsteen's previous effort, Born to Run. In this album, the main character in almost all of the songs is in his teens, an urban youth who needs, for various reasons, to escape the city. It is this sense of physical escape from one's home coupled with the constant presence of The Big Man (Springsteen's sax player, Clarence Clemmons, who shares the album cover with the singer) that has prompted a friend to liken the album's personae to a modern, urban Huck Finn/Jim, in the same sense as Leslie Fiedler has described the relationship.

One of the two "climactic" songs on DOTEOT, "Racing in the Streets," would make a telling theme for a film such as the one proposed, since it is the only song on the album that tells a complete story by itself. The song begins with a repeating figure that is, at one and the same time, both a variation on the opening figure of Jan and Dean's "Deadman's Curve" (Liberty 95672, 1964), another song about racing, and a direct reference to "Then He Kissed Me" (Philles 115 1963). Right away, then, the central conflict is set up in parallel with the question: is this a love song or a racing song?

As the song begins, the main character is talking about his car when he refers to "her." He spends his evenings with a man named Sonny in a pragmatic, platonic relationship ("we got no strings attached"), racing allegedly only for the money. At this point, the chorus is established, and the reference to the early-sixties hit "Dancing in the Streets" is made. The chorus, by the way, is sung to the same tune as the verse, so that it is a chorus in lyric only.

At the second verse, the singer refers to "we." At this point, the "we" refers either to the singer and Sonny, or to the singer, the car, and Sonny. By the end of the second verse, the singer describes his explanation for his lifestyle. Rather than viewing himself in the overly self-aware way in which a liberal might tend to depict him, the singer de-personalizes the situation by pointing out that "some guys" go racing after work, while others don't. The singer sees that his racing is a way to fight off the emotional atrophy brought on by dehumanizing work, but is not smug enough to assume that he is the only one to elude this atrophy.

At this point, in place of a "real" chorus, the repeating figure with which we are, by now, familiar, is repeated only after a modulation up a third. The repeating figure plays in this new key, then modulates back to the original. The effect, however, is not one of return, but of advancement, of having taken a step up. It is after this "stepup" in the song (emotionally) that the singer begins probing himself a bit more.

He now turns his thoughts to his wife/ girlfriend. He thinks about the toll his racing life is taking on her. After a long verse of this careful introspection, he resolves that, "tonight my baby and me/we're gonna ride to the sea/and wash these sins off our hands." The singer has decided it is time to grow up, to neither join those who are, in his own words, "Dying little by little, piece by piece," nor to value his car over his wife/ girlfriend and their relationship. Without mentioning her by name, the singer has begun referring to the lady when he uses

"her." His car was, in fact, the instrument that "won" his girl for him. He owes his past to his car, but he owes his future to the girl.

This time, as the singer sings of racing down a highway, it is not the futile attempt to beat time, but to get somewhere. To find a place where he can be someone and he and his girl can wash their hands of the past. The final irony here being, of course, that it is the car itself which is taking them away from their past. The conflict mentioned earlier, inherent in the repeating figure, is by now resolved, the song ending in a long fadeout which has the chord structure of the earlier repetitions, but with the melodic figure missing. The singer did not have to forsake either his music or his car. The car itself is taking him away from his previous style of life on to a better life with his girl.

At a time when producers are scrambling more frantically than ever to make "movies the kid'll like," with sometimes ludicrous efforts to mate a youth-oriented concept with an atrocity of a rock soundtrack, a movie based on a rock singer/ songwriter's output makes sense (especially if the record company and studio can make some kind of mutually rewarding agreement), and Bruce Springsteen in Darkness on the Edge of Town (probably retitled by the studio to something like Cars) as a choice for such a picture makes even more

Recueillement

By Johannes Lucas

LIGHT

I love to turn and watch the reactions of an audience that is bound up in the plot of a film. In the white light their faces struggle against their feelings toward the action, the white shadow of which clings to the contours of their countenance, though it is only in an outdoor daylight scene that one can absorb the full scope of an audience's mood, and if it is a shock cut they may be reacting more to the extreme juxtaposition of light than the new scene which has not even existed long enough to be absorbed. And if it is a horror film that I have seen many times before, one whose climactic startler virtually reaches out and grabs the viewer, I like to slouch down low in my front row seat, uncomfortable, ripped, and gummy as it is, and, as the ending reaches its inexorable apotheosis, achieved by a cohesion of music and montage, bend forward and turn my head, as the fluctuations of light signify cuts which I know by heart, and watch as the inevitable moment sends individuals reeling back in their seats, with hands to mouths, eyes, and ears, which are fixed as if with a stern mind of their own which forces the victim/body to suffer the emotional turmoil as if it were a bug-eyed Alex.

One hears tell of psychological studies in which audiences are filmed by cameras

near the screen as they watched a prepared movie that is keyed to a number of possible reactions, and the two films, played side by side, show the diversified group refusing to laugh at jokes made at the expense of their own particular professions and beliefs, e.g., the morticians are seen as a stony island in a crowd rolling with glee at mortician jokes. I think of all the films that contain scenes that occur in movie auditoriums, and I am led to the possibility, a hopeless one, the ungainly, limited, and impractical idea film students come up with, of making a film called The Audience, which tells the story of a group of people in terms of their reactions to a film we hear but never see, like the real Inspector General, but this would be like filming a Western utterly from the viewpoint and Ozu-camera position of the horses; in these scenes in movie theaters, the essence of the light is never captured, the harsh, blue, vivid, and unfocused beam that has the run of the place. Light is very important to the mood of viewers, from the sculpturing of a photographed scene to the quality light has in a place of viewing. We sit in darkness to experience light. Our response to the organization of film elements is of such complication that the possibilities and nuances may never be fully explained. Movies can still be volatile and the subjects of suppression, and the (in a sense) willed controversy over the violence in The Warriors indicates the power that film still has, but seldom exploits. The focusing of the viewer's attention, the realism of photography itself, as well as the "secret" feeling of sitting in a darkened room from which one's window on the world is so controlled, and with such little sense of an "author" or overvoice, the recognizability of narrative, and the use of characters with whom the viewer may identify or hate, all this and more contribute to, in this case, the unleashing of emotions that characterizes the experience of seeing The Warriors. That anyone would still want to suppress a film suggests to me that the cinema as an effective art is still alive, for though there are standards by which a work of art is judged to be an aesthetic object, if an art ceases to serve in capacities other than the aesthetic, that art recedes from the larger society's attention and comes to be labeled dead. Film is a grand art, like opera, music, and poetry, in that it can induce sublime emotions.

But I am emotional even before I enter the theater, for I am engaged in a neverending search for a mood that will recreate in me, through the resurrection of vast, vague memories, a physical feeling, a tingling at the core of my chest and in my loins, and in the rushing up of energy through my body, culminating in my eyes which, as this incredible interiority is converted to the raw flush of emotion, fill with tears. Though I am often frustrated, the tentative promise of this experience draws me on, and because it is attached to nothing but the frozen stagecraft of mood, because it is something of my past that drifts amorphously in search of a signifier on which to alight, it gives me the illusion of special worth and destiny while at the same time humbles by being so difficult to find or describe. As with an atom, I must infer its existence from its effect. I remember as a child lying sleepy in the back seat of the car after a drive-in, and in this unusual position, watching the wave-like series of repetitious lights and shadows caused by street lamps above being passed by the car. The sleepfilled eyes, the dust and must smell of the hard, ribbed cushion, the hum and movement of the car in traffic, all created in me a feeling of perfect and passive bliss. There is something beautiful in the harmonious movement of large groups, in this case leaving a drive-in with the sad poignance of the break-up of the cold, fleeting community.

This is a difficult moment to achieve, for memory is thoughtful enough to shave away the extraneous and mind-diverting stimuli that probably lead to the germ of the experience itself, and as I sit now groping for the essence of the past I have both ceased to live in the present, thereby nullifying the possibility of acquiring future memories, and opened myself to other, newer diversions. While in this endless search, while sitting in a theater, I find myself looking at the faces of other people, and it is easy to become transfixed by the three-quarters

angle I have of a woman's face, to fall in love with the way her hair is desaturated by the glow of the screen, a Zeus sending out shards of light she collects in the calm cowl of her hair. Perhaps she turns her head to the left or to the right, providing me a limned profile that eradicates the blemishes of life, as did the photography of the old Hollywood masters. She might laugh, and I will love the soul of her laughter, and analyze her in terms of that on the screen at which she laughed. My interest in Art has been abrogated by the stern and devious manipulator Life, who casts me to the small, futile, glorious, hopeful, limitless, lost, and loveless pursuit of the details of her life. In the romantic and vivid ambience of cinema, fine memories and misplaced desires have been revitalized. I am in love. And isn't love what I truly wanted to talk about? Love and cinema merge perfectly, though if this love were real it would rise up out of the woman and clutch me. So often the love is within me already and prowls like a searchlight scouring the stone walls of a prison for one loose vagrant prisoner upon whom I can fling out the full force of my emotion, received as a screen receives but much more receptively the steady beam of the projector, for the screen knows what to do with the light.

Treading softly afterwards, the sounds of others' voices slowed before my ears by the sharp guardian Passion, who admits the call of friends only as a dense dull thud during the sleepy yet swift exit from the auditorium through the lobby to the street. I weave my way through the crowd, my desperate eyes seized with a thirst for knowledge of her, yearning to grasp every visual clue in this blithe other, like a fated bud opening against a rain that swiftly crushes down the tender petal amidst the wise health of wetted grass and boughs. She seems to move slowly, and eventually stops, and I must re-maneuver myself into an adequate proximity, a casual distance, and previously ignored friends are spoken to with a ferocious and immobilizing aggressiveness, though they are now beckoned away by night drives and warm beds. Their confused but patient expressions do not suggest deterrence from the critical exercise expected of them, but their talk must vie with my repetitive glances at her as she lingers in the lobby. (You do not know what squeaky little monsters you make of us.) She seems to be waiting for some unknown agent or approach which deprives me of the necessary eye contact that would relieve me of the inarticulation of my voice and thoughts. When the inevitable boyfriend, whom I hadn't noticed before, returns from the men's room, or honks his horn from the street outside in brusque and masculine rudeness, I give her, as she passes, a quick and small smile which she returns indifferently but kindly, and my talk takes on a newfound bitterness, and the drained possibility of life whitens the edges of my expression. All of this passion, hope, indecision,

and despair has occurred beneath the mask of normalcy, and a complete life born and burst in an instant, like an insect, living completely, exhausted then extinguished, performing its instinctually preordained duties futilely, the purpose of its life, unknown even to its own insentient self, below the surface of any possible observation. I am a mystery to myself. Later, while crossing one of the innumerable bridges that unite the city like stitches on a wide, peeping tear, I ponder the water that attacks my city from all directions, as pervasive as the very substance that allows us to see, from the high mountains that collect it and direct it back in the form of long and lazy rivers, garnered from the ceaseless rain above and the drenched soil below that turns green the hills, to the tears that spring forth from eyes tormented by lost love, dead hopes, and lonely hearts, the invisible irrigation of an artist's soul.

OUR LAST ISSUE

Audie Bock is a woman, not the "he" referred to in our last "Notes."

Also, an expanded version of her *Real Paper* article on Kurosawa appears in the March *Take One*.

Peter Farris of New York writes us concerning the Bulle Ogier filmography. He notes that Juliet Berto is the correct spelling of that actress's name and adds the film Jamais plus Toujours (Never More, Forever), 1976, directed by Yannick Bellon: The story involves Bulle arriving to auction off the belongings of an actress friend who's recently died (Loleh Bellon); there is a disjunctive time structure alternating frequent flashbacks. Most interesting to Bulle aficionados, however, is an ending which projects Bulle into the future (including make-up to age her)." Mr. Farris finds Bulle's appearance in Rivette's L'Amour Fou "her richest and most complete performance."

NEXT ISSUE & FORTHCOMING

Hitchcock and the Ethics of Vision: A Metareading, an important monograph by Leland Poague, will comprise the main body of our next issue; the usual columns will remain. The usual "forthcomings" include Jeff Lieberman; Lolita, Laughter in the Dark, King, Queen, Knave, Despair; Barry Lyndon; American sex comedies of the sixties; Yojimbo/Fistful of Dollars; Alien; Manhattan; Obsession: Lost Vertigo; Apocalypse Now; and Claudia Jennings, maybe.

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